



Battlestar Prometheus

By Ryan A. Keeton

With Theresa Madrid

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

Colonel Nigel Alexander: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Sentinel

Colonel Marco Hall: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Vigilant

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"

Captain Michael "Archangel" Johnston: Commander, 23rd Air Support Group (A.S.G.) "Grim Reapers"

Lieutenant Allain Halloran: Prometheus Operations Officer

Petty Officer Theresa Madrid: Chief of the Boat (C.O.B.), Battlestar Prometheus

Captain Stacie "Sheba" Percival: Former Commander of the 54th Viper Squadron, she was believed killed in action against Alliance forces. Now she has returned under mysterious circumstances.

FOE

Primus Lucius Verenos: Supreme Commander of the Alliance Expansionary Armed Forces and Acting Sae'tzar of the Terran Alliance

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

Galaxus Rollo Thomasi: Commander of the 1st Alliance Expansionary Fleet (Terran Sector)

PROLOGUE

THE LONG SILENCE

FLAG SUITE BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS IN ORBIT OF GAS GIANT 1715-A SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

*COMMAND LOG
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
JONATHAN TURNER, COMMANDING*

It has been almost a month since our escape from Terra and our repairs are nearly complete. It pains me to know that most of my crew has been languishing in a Terran prison while we work on this, but the damages done to the Prometheus while in enemy hands were more extensive than I first believed.

Our jump system was still intact but our main sublight drives were in terrible shape. It seems the Alliance was interested in our reactor systems and had them nearly dismantled when we took the ship back. It's only due to the amazing skills of Captain Briedis and an extraordinary amount of luck that we didn't blow ourselves to pieces when we tried to escape. Needless to say, all maneuvering systems have been restored.

Weapons were easily repaired since most of the damage done to them was by the Alliance's engineers trying to jury rig them into working without the proper access codes. It took only two days to get them and our launch systems back online.

What puzzles me most was that the Alliance didn't take a lot from us. All of our food stores were still on boards as well as our fuel and ammunition. Of course, our ammo isn't designed for their craft so I would imagine that they had it slated for study only.

They did steal five Vipers and two Raptors though. Easy enough to replace once we get our production facilities back online, but I worry about the information they will glean from those ships. They are light years ahead of the Accipiter class fighters they now use and I dread thinking about how that technology will be adapted to suit them.

All of that aside, getting my crew back and continuing our mission is still top priority for me. The month long delay has allowed us to do extensive recon on the Ironhold Penal Colony on Mars where our people are being held. While the facility itself is well defended, the Alliance government has moved in several ships in the last two weeks.

I think they know we're coming.

Commander Turner rubbed his eyes as he leaned back in his chair and closed out the log page on his computer. It was long after midnight by ships standard time and he was due in the C.I.C. in less than five hours but he couldn't sleep. When he slept, he dreamed.

He dreamed of the coming apocalypse.

He had been averaging about 4 hours of sleep a night since the recapture of the *Prometheus*. It was enough to keep him functioning but he felt like he had aged ten years in the weeks since his ship had fallen into enemy hands.

Often he found his idle thoughts plagued by the images of horror he had seen while in his coma aboard the *Sentinel* and when he was able to put those thoughts out of his mind, he was distracted by the thoughts of what his crew must be enduring.

Especially his friend, James Ryan.

Ryan had been in command of *Prometheus* when she fell and Turner knew in his heart that the man had probably suffered terrible abuse at the hands of his captors because of this.

Because of me Turner thought. *I should have been the one to endure that, not Jim.*

Turner shook his head and took another sip of coffee from his mug. "I'm sorry old friend." he said looking at the picture of him and Ryan together on the day they had assumed command of *Prometheus*.

In the picture, Turner had his left arm draped around the young Colonel's shoulders. Both men wore smiles on their faces—Turner's slight and reserved, Ryan's toothy and boyish.

Looking away from the picture Turner stood and was about to remove his jacket when the speaker above his com panel buzzed, followed by the familiar voice of Petty Officer Theresa Madrid.

"C.I.C. to commanding officer."

"Go ahead." Turner replied as he pushed the button for the loud speaker.

"Sir, we have incoming traffic on the H.F. relay band."

Turner arched his eyebrow. The High Frequency relay band was the signal used by Colonial Fleet Command through the string of relay Satellites that the *Prometheus* had dropped like cookie crumbs to maintain communications.

However, since the Prometheus' capture they hadn't been able to communicate with home because they were out of range of the last satellite that they had dropped which made it strange that they would be receiving such com traffic.

"I'll be there momentarily." Turner said.

Moments later, still dressed in his physical training gear, Turner entered the C.I.C. to find Captain April Kaplan, the ships Flight Surgeon, standing watch.

"Duty roster must be getting pretty shallow if you're pulling watch." Turner commented.

Kaplan chuckled. "The C.A.G. was scheduled but she's been running herself ragged lately. I ordered her to get at least eight hours of rest."

"I didn't see that in your daily report." Turner said with an arched eyebrow.

"I handled it in an *unofficial* capacity, sir."

"Ah." Turner nodded. "Well we're too short handed right now so any help is welcome."

"Glad to be of service." The doctor replied as she handed a hard copy to the Commander. "Here's what we got on the H.F.R.B."

Turner took the paper and read it carefully before turning to Maddie who was working diligently at the Operations station normally occupied by Lieutenant Halloran.

"This is from Colonel Hall on the *Vigilant*."

"Yes sir." Maddie replied. "He found the last relay Satellite we dropped and downloaded the latest data package it received. He also dropped a relay sat before he left the sector so we have unbroken communications with him."

"I see." Turner said as he continued to read. "Says here he successfully ran a test signal back along the network too."

"Yes sir." Maddie replied with a smile. "We have a link to home again."

Turner nodded and smiled slightly. "Tell Colonel Hall that I said *good job* and have him start making his way back towards us again."

"Yes sir."

"Also, contact all department heads and have them compile their log entries and current status reports for a data burst back to home."

“Yes sir.” Maddie replied.

“Sir,” Doctor Kaplan said as Turner moved to leave, “What about letters for the families of the crew we lost.”

Turner shook his head. “Not yet. Let’s see how the operation on Mars goes first.”

“Because we might not have to write as many?” Kaplan asked hopefully.

“No,” Turner said quietly, “Because we might have to write more.”

**PANTHEON OF THE GRAND CONCLAVE
CITY OF ROMALIN
TERRA**

“Order!” The Sergeant at Arms shouted above the din of voices that all clamored for recognition. “We must have order!”

The voices still were not silenced and seemed to grow louder as Primus Lucius Verenos entered the chamber followed by Galaxus Rollo Thomasi.

Verenos took a look around the chamber at the many members who were standing on their feet and shouting to be recognized by the Sergeant at Arms. No one, it seemed, wanted to yield the floor to anyone else.

It reaffirmed Thomasi’s belief that politics was a dishonorable profession and he did his best not to curl his lip in contempt.

Suddenly, the room went silent as the sound of a single shot echoed through the chamber.

All eyes turned to the center of the room on the raised dais where Primus Verenos was now holstering his service sidearm.

He waited a moment before he spoke but when he did, his quiet words were powerful.

“The Conclave was called to order ten minutes ago yet none of you could shut up long enough to get started.” Verenos said as he shook his head in disbelief. “It’s no wonder that nothing gets done in this room.”

Several people made to stand and protest but Verenos raised his hands and the voices stayed silent.

“I am not a politician, gentlemen, so you will forgive me for being blunt: Sae'tzar has been dead for over a month. In that time I have fulfilled my duties as Primus by stepping in and managing the day to day activities of the Alliance but my time in this capacity is at an end. By law, a new Sae'tzar must be elected within thirty days of the death of his predecessor and we are at day twenty nine. The time has come to choose a new leader of the Alliance.”

His words greeted with applause, Primus Verenos gestured to acknowledge a raised hand.

“With permission, Primus, I would address the Conclave on this matter.”

Verenos nodded. “The Conclave recognizes the honorable Prefect of Babylon, Lord Horatio.”

Horatio, an older man with a lean build and cropped, graying hair stood and looked out over the tiered seats of the Conclave for a long moment before he began.

He certainly has a flair for the dramatic Thomasi thought to himself as he moved to stand at Verenos side. *It should work well for us today.*

“Fellow delegates of the Conclave,” Horatio finally said, “We live in desperate times. The decision we make today will be a momentous one— one that will be remembered throughout our history. As we chose the next leader of our grand society we must consider the dangers that encroach upon us. Piracy is preying on our free traders, smugglers are undercutting our economy and we have a fleet armed with perhaps the most powerful warship ever assembled moving through our space at will.”

Horatio paused to let the import of his words sink in and as Thomasi looked around the Conclave chamber he could see that they were having the desired effect. In the tiered seats, the delegates of the conclave were murmuring to each other and nodding in agreement.

“Today we must choose a leader who will address these security threats swiftly and decisively. We must choose a leader who will not allow the politics of the Conclave to deter his will in keeping the Alliance safe from predation from enemies both within our border and from outside them. It is for these reasons and for the recent demonstrations of his outstanding character and moral judgment that I propose an unprecedented action: I propose that we elect Primus Lucius Verenos as our next Sae'tzar.”

The room erupted into shouts of both support and opposition as Horatio took his seat. Verenos allowed the voices to go unchecked for a moment as he did his best to look surprised.

Of course, both he and Thomasi both knew that this was anything but a surprise. It had in fact been planned months ahead of time.

Verenos and Thomasi were both part of a group that called themselves “Crusaders”. They believed that humanity had to be reunited under Alliance rule, by force if necessary, in order to achieve the great society that had been foretold of in the ancient texts.

Their opposition in this was the group who called themselves “Guardians”. They believed that to make contact with the other twelve colonies would be to risk contaminating their society with the same ideas and corruptions that destroyed the once thriving world of Kobol.

Since the chance discovery of the twelve colonies twenty years prior by a long range exploration ship that had drifted off course, these two groups had been fighting for control of the hearts and minds of the Conclave.

Until recently, the Guardians had maintained control by ensuring that their candidates controlled the offices of Primus and Sae’tzar. Now with both Claudio Maximus and Marcus Antonius dead, the Guardians had lost the two most powerful figures in their movement.

The chance to sway some of the more neutral Prefects to their cause had come and neither Thomasi nor Verenos wanted to waste the opportunity.

Holding up a hand for silence, Verenos rose from his chair that sat next to and one step down from the one normally occupied by the Sae’tzar during Conclave gatherings. Adopting an expression of humility, he began to speak.

“To say I am humbled by this nomination would be a gross understatement. Never before in our history has a Primus been nominated to succeed as Sae’tzar and I am profoundly aware of the honor that goes with being the first. As I said before, I am not a politician-- I am a warrior. I have strived all of my life to serve the Alliance in any way I could, therefore I would be remiss in my duty if I turned down this opportunity to serve once again. With that in mind, I accept this nomination and open the floor to others who would speak for or against it. Let the voices of the Alliance be heard.”

Applause rang out at Verenos’ words and even Thomasi found himself impressed by the Primus’ oratory skills.

Both men locked eyes for a moment and shared a knowing look that their plans were coming to fruition.

Soon, Verenos would be Sae’tzar and Thomasi would be Primus. After that it was simply a matter of cleaning house and making sure that all of the right people were in the right places.

Nothing would stop them this time.

CHAPTER 1

THE PLAN

PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE QUORUM TOWER, CAPRICA CITY CAPRICA

“So let me see if I get this straight,” said President Richard Adar as he leaned back in his chair, “You haven’t had contact with the Prometheus in over a month?”

“Correct sir.” Replied Fleet Admiral David Anthony. “Commander Turner usually makes his status reports once a week. Granted, we don’t get them until nearly a month after he sends them, but he *is* consistent about them.”

Adar nodded and rubbed his weary eyes. It had already been a long day for him. He had spent the better part of the morning wrestling with the Quorum of Twelve over a new law that would allow limited use of advanced computers and artificial intelligence for military purposes which had, needless to say, raised a firestorm of debate. The Geminon delegation had begun spouting religious rhetoric at an amazing pace trying to cite every scripture under the stars as reasons why they shouldn’t even be listening to the proposal.

They even had the gall to say that the first Cylon War had been the wrath of the gods for defying their will.

Of course his friend and close advisor, Dr. Gaius Baltar, had come to his aid citing several medical fields where the use of advanced computing technology could actually help in the development of treatments for some very serious ailments.

In the end, the Quorum had agreed to the measure but only on a limited basis and on the provision that it be tested in a strictly controlled manner. That was when Baltar had suggested that they test it by updating the navigation systems of the Colonial Fleet with his Command Navigation Program.

The C.N.P., as it was known in scientific circles, was a program that allowed a limited A.I. to handle all of the navigational duties on a starship. *Faster Than Light* jumps could be calculated in mere seconds and sublight maneuvers would be streamlined almost to the point where human hands wouldn’t be necessary for the process.

The Gemineese were still more than upset about it but Adar had been able to secure the crucial votes of Libron and Aquarion by agreeing to give their civilian trade fleets first crack at the program if it proved viable.

This would be a boon to their economy since both worlds were transport hubs for the colonies. Being located at the two best nexus for F.T.L. routes had helped them earn that reputation.

“So what do you propose we do about it?” Adar asked, bringing his thoughts back to the subject at hand.

“Honestly sir, there isn’t much we *can* do at this point.” Admiral Anthony replied. “Even if we were to organize a search and rescue attempt, it would take a month just to get the ships ready to go and then another eight to ten to get them out to where the Prometheus was last reported.”

Adar nodded as the images of new wave headlines flashed through his head. Once it went public that the Prometheus had been lost, he would be blamed. He would take yet another plummet in the polls and his re-election campaign would be over before it even began.

“We’ll keep this quiet for now.” Adar said. “Go ahead and begin assembling a search and rescue effort but keep it all below the radar for now. Report back to me when you have details on the expedition.”

“Yes sir.” Anthony replied as he stood. “It shouldn’t be a problem keeping it under the table. The Battlestar *Eternal* is due in for refit at Thermopylae in a week. I’ll put her and the Gunstar *Saber* on standby as the two rescue ships. If we haven’t heard back from Turner in a month, we can dispatch them quietly.”

“Sounds good Admiral, keep me posted.”

**WAR ROOM
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
INORBIT OF GAS GIANT 1715-A
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

“Commander on deck.” Major Horvath announced as Commander Turner made his way into the war room of the Battlestar Prometheus. Immediately, the officers and senior crewmen assembled there snapped to attention.

“At ease.” Commander Turner said, allowing his subordinates to relax. “Time is of the essence here so I’ll be brief. Our last Raptor over flight showed two Conqueror class cruisers in orbit over Mars. They also observed several heavy lift shuttles parked on a tarmac just outside the complex walls. In addition to this, the Vigilant intercepted several coded transmissions from Alliance warships and tracked their location to a system two jumps away. In short, it looks like the Alliance knows we’re coming.”

This announcement elicited a low groan from the assembled officers and crewmen and Turner knew why. Most of the eight hundred Marines assigned to the Prometheus, those who would normally take on a mission such as this, were in captivity on Mars. It would be the normal crewmen, led and trained by the remaining Marines, who went to the rescue of their brethren.

“Okay people, *shut it!*” Maddie finally shouted, bringing murmuring to a halt. “We’ve been in worse situations over the last few weeks and we stood up and did our duty. We’re *going* to do it again.”

“The Chief is right.” Turner said as he stepped closer to her. “We’ve all been through a lot in the last few weeks, some more than most. Every one of you endured during your captivity under the Alliance and in truth, nothing more *should* be asked of you. Were the situation any different, I *wouldn’t* ask any of you to do this but I have no choice. You are all that is left and your brothers and sisters who are now languishing in that prison on Mars need you more than ever. Still, I will allow any of you to bow out with no dishonor.”

Turner looked around the room and where there had been fear and apprehension in the eyes of his subordinates before, there was now only steely resolve.

Turner nodded. “Good, this is how we do it,” He said rolling out a map of the prison facility.

“The Prometheus and the Vigilant are going to engage the Alliance task force in orbit of Mars to prevent them from reinforcing their troops on the ground. Slider will be acting as C.A.G. for this mission and his task will be to keep the enemy fighter contingent occupied up here so that they can’t mess with you down there.”

The commander pointed to a ridge of mountains not far from the prison site. “Here is where the Sentinel will make planetfall. Our assault shuttles will go in first and land a company of troops. They will setup a landing zone for the Sentinel.”

“Those soldiers will be awfully exposed there, sir. Will they have any type of heavy weapons support?” Asked a Marine from the back.

“We’re deploying all of our Landram II APC’s for this mission. They will have plenty of firepower backing them up.” Turner said with a smile. “Once the *Sentinel* is down, we will load up all of the Marines in the Landrams and move out for the prison facility. Once there, we will blow the front gate with our heavy weapons and make our way to the prisoner barracks. We will form a perimeter around the barracks and get everyone out.”

“What about the big guns on those automated defense towers, sir?” Asked Major Tompkins.

“That’s where Lieutenant Halloran comes in.” The commander replied as he gestured Halloran over. “Explain your plan to deal with that.”

“Sir,” Halloran acknowledged Turner’s lead, “my Shadow Team will do a night time orbital para-drop eight hours before your attack. We will move along this ridge,” he said pointing out the terrain feature on the map, “and enter the compound from the back. We will then make our way to the automated defense grid and destroy it, rendering those turrets inoperative.”

“How long will it take you?” Asked Major Horvath, the acting X.O..

“We plan to have them down about ten minutes before you attack.” Halloran replied.

“That’s cutting it awfully close, Lieutenant.” Horvath frowned.

“Any earlier and we risk them getting the turrets operational again before you are out of there.”

Horvath nodded and accepted Halloran’s logic. “This is going to be tight then.”

“Yes,” Turner replied gravely, “And we are probably going to lose a few people.”

The commander let this thought sink into the heads of his subordinates for a moment. It would be a dangerous mission and he was sure that the next time he saw some of the faces in front of him they would be in body bags.

“Ok, get with your section heads for more specific details and begin mission rehearsals immediately. The more you practice now, the less you will bleed when the fighting starts.” Turner commanded.

“Sir, when do we go?”

“We jump in twenty hours people. That’s not much time so *get hot.*”

**INTERVIEW ROOM 12
MARS PENAL COLONY, MARS
TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Executor Tyranus Bane smiled as he entered the small room that he had converted into an interrogation chamber. In the center of the room, shackled to a steel table, lay Colonel James Ryan covered only a ragged cloth.

The temperature in the room was only a few degrees above hypothermic levels and Ryan was stretched out in a spread eagle fashion that didn't allow him to conserve any body heat.

Of course, this wasn't the first time Ryan had been in this situation.

Since the capture of the Prometheus, Bane had found a perverse pleasure in torturing and humiliating the man. Officially, he put it down to wanting to break the man in order to learn more Colonial secrets.

In reality he despised Ryan with every fiber of his being.

Bane had grown up hard on the streets of the capital city of Arcturus. He had been forced to learn how to survive when his father had been rounded up and executed for treason. His whole family had suffered for his father's mistakes and it had been left up to him, as the oldest child, to see to the welfare of the family.

From that day forward he studied and worked harder than anyone else in his family. He wanted to join the elite Crimson Watch, the organization that rooted out all subversive activity within the Alliance.

There was no one he hadn't been willing to crush, no one he wouldn't have betrayed to get what he wanted.

Of course, these were traits that were prized in the Crimson Watch. He had been recruited at eighteen and gone on to serve with distinction. He had even arrested his own brother when the man had dared to suggest that their father was innocent.

He had worked hard for what he had, for the privileges he now possessed.

Born to an illustrious family, he had everything Ryan ever wanted handed to him on a silver platter. He never had to do a hard days work in his life, never had to suffer the indignities that Bane had. That infuriated him so much that he had almost broken his cover on the Prometheus several times because the desire to strangle the arrogant man was so strong.

Finding out that he was a secret homosexual had been the final straw for Bane, though.

Although such activity was not unheard of in the Alliance, the people who practiced it had the good sense not to let anyone know, lest they be ostracized by society.

Personally, Bane found the homosexual lifestyle abhorrent. It disgusted him to think that a man would degrade himself in such a way.

That was the main reason he loved tormenting Ryan. He made it his mission to find new ways to inflict mental and physical anguish on the man every day.

And he would keep on doing it— right up until he died.

“Good morning Colonel.” Bane said with scorn dripping from his voice like venom. “Did we have a good sleep last night?”

On the table, James Ryan fought to remain conscious and clear headed but it was difficult. He had gone three days with almost no sleep and he was shivering uncontrollably. His body ached from the repeated physical injuries inflicted on him and he didn't have the strength to lift his head.

“That's okay Colonel, rest while you can. We have a long day ahead of us.”

Several hours later, Michael ‘Archangel’ Johnston laid the badly beaten colonel back on the softest material he could find in the ramshackle room that he and several other officers shared.

“Easy now Colonel,” Archangel said as Ryan whimpered in pain. “Everything is okay now. You're back with friends.”

Ryan made no attempt to reply as he immediately fell unconscious.

Archangel shook his head sadly. Every five days, Bane would come and take the Colonel away, sometimes for days at a time. He would torture him almost to death and then bring him back along with food and med packs for Archangel to patch him up. Then, just as Ryan would regain some of his strength, Bane would take him again.

Archangel had tended to the X.O.'s wounds and had done everything he could to try and keep the Colonel strong, but with every session the man grew weaker.

Though he wouldn't admit it to anyone else, his prayers to the Lords of Kobol had lately changed from giving Ryan strength, to begging for them to let him die so he wouldn't suffer anymore.

“We can't keep this up much longer.” Said a Marine lieutenant named Dalton as he attended to the cuts on the Colonel's chest. “The man is going to die soon.”

Archangel nodded. “Keep the faith, Lieutenant. I know Commander Turner is out there looking for us right now and he *will* come for us.”

“Right,” Dalton snorted. “The Commander is probably dead and even if he isn’t the Prometheus is in enemy hands. What is he going to do with two Gunstars?”

Archangel smiled. “You would be surprised at what someone can do with limited resources. Remind me to tell you about the trials of Alexander sometime.”

“More scripture, eh Oracle?” Dalton asked with a smirk. “Keep the faith and all that?”

“See? It’s starting to sink in.”

A voice from the shadows chuckled and Archangel turned to see the woman, her face badly bruised and battered and framed by dirty blonde hair. “Maybe,” said Sheba, “But if the Commander is going to come rescue us he better do it soon or there won’t *be* anyone left to rescue.”

CHAPTER 2

SHADOW & FLAME

Matt Campagna entered the studios of the Caprica News Network in a hurry, blazing right by his co-host Nat Tubanos as he made his way to his office. His face was painted with excitement and intensity and he kept a death grip on a tightly rolled sheet of paper.

“Um, hi.” Nat said as he breezed past her.

“Can’t talk now-- big news! *BIG* news!” he replied as he strode into his office and sat down in his chair.

Her curiosity piqued, Nat turned and followed him, entering his office just as he began to power up his computer terminal.

“Ok hot shot, you got me. What’s got you so excited?” she said as she sat down in a chair opposite him.

Smiling, Matt handed over the rolled paper to Nat. Her eyes widened as she began to read.

TO: FLEET ADMIRAL DAVID ANTHONY
FROM: VICE ADMIRAL JONATHAN ARMUS,
COMMANDER, COLONIAL FLEET EXPLORATION COMMAND

SUBJECT: BSG 22
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: SECRET LEVEL 1

Sir: as I indicated in my report two weeks ago, we have lost all contact with BSG 22. The last standard test signals we ran through the communications relay system was traced all the way back to the Prometheus' last known position. This being said, we know that the system has not been compromised

At this time it takes approximately three weeks for a signal to run the course of the relay system one way, six weeks for a round trip. It has now been three weeks since we received the nominal standard update from Prometheus Actual.

I am assuming that something catastrophic has happened to the expedition. I currently have two teams going over the last reports from Prometheus in an attempt to piece together a hypothesis of what has happened.

Based on the last reports we received from Prometheus Actual, we have determined that the reports of an encounter with a hostile life form are likely.

We will continue with our investigation of this until we can find an answer. Also, per Presidential order, we are outfitting the Battlestar Atlantis and the Scoutstar Bellerephon for a possible rescue mission.

Further updates to follow as they become available.

Respectfully,
Jonathan Armus
Vice Admiral, C.F.E.C.
Commanding

Nat looked up from the report with eyes wide. "Oh my gods."

Matt nodded. "This could be the biggest story of the year."

"How did you get this?" Nat asked quietly, looking over her shoulder.

"My friend in the Information Ministry." Matt replied smugly.

"You mean that homely girl that you've been-"

"All worth it." Matt said cutting her off.

As Nat looked down at the paper in her hand once again, she couldn't help but nod her head in agreement. "So what are you going to do?"

Matt raised his right eyebrow. "What do you *think* I'm going to do? I'm going to run with it."

"We had a deal with the President, Matt."

“A deal that he welched on, *Nat*. Sure, he got us the interview with Baltar but he was supposed to give us first shot at Prometheus updates. So far, Sag News Corp has scooped us on *every* update. And why, you ask? Because he doesn’t like *me*.”

Nat shook her head and rolled her eyes. She loved Matt with all her heart yet he could be the most egotistical and self centered man she knew. “That’s right Matt, all because of *you*.”

“Sarcasm doesn’t become you, my dear.” Matt replied dryly. “The plain and simple truth is that he frakked us and I intend to frak him right back.”

“So you’re going on air with this?”

Matt smiled. “Gods damned right I am and to hell with Adar. He’s screwed me for the last time.”

**PILOT’S BARRACKS
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
IN ORBIT OF GAS GIANT 1715-A
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

“Attention all hands: Prepare for combat jump. I say again, prepare for combat jump. Set Condition One throughout the ship and begin jump prep.”

Slider looked up from the picture of Sheba that he held in his hands as he bowed on one knee in silent prayer to the gods for the protection of her immortal soul. Taking one last look, he kissed his first two fingers and placed them gently over her face.

It had been over two months since she had died in combat against the Alliance and the pain was still fresh in his mind. More and more he found himself wishing for her presence, if even just to argue.

Only in the cockpit was he able to put the pain out of his mind. While he was there he allowed the pain to morph into another emotion all together-- *anger*. And from the anger he was able to do the one thing that made him feel a little better:

Kill the enemy.

Every Alliance fighter he blew into tiny pieces of shrapnel was a small measure of revenge that soothed his heart for a time and brought peace to his soul. Of course, when he landed on the deck again and had to face the cold walls of his bunk room, the pain came back to him with a vengeance.

Lords of Kobol, hear my prayer he thought to himself Bless my hands so that they may war upon my enemies. Bless my mind so that I might exact the toll for the one I love. Bless my heart and give me peace so that I may hurt no more. Bless the one I love and let her dwell in thy house forever.

“Ahem.”

Closing his eyes for a moment to regain his composure, Slider stood and placed the picture of Sheba back on his bunk, closing the curtain over it. Only then did he turn to find Shooter standing behind him in the hatch way with his flight suit on and his helmet under his arm.

“What’s up kid?” Slider asked as he picked up his own helmet.

“Thought I’d tag along with you to the bay.” Shooter replied with a slight smile.

Slider nodded. “Swell, Let’s go.”

Together both men set out for the lift that would take them to the main flight deck.

“How you feeling?” Shooter asked once inside the lift.

“Frosty and sharp.” Slider replied. “You?”

“Frosty and sharp.” Shooter replied.

Both men continued the ride in silence until the lift stopped. As the doors opened, the unmistakable odor of Tyllium fuel and lubricants filled their nostrils. In front of them, orange clad ‘knuckle draggers’ moved about quickly preparing Mark VII Vipers for launch.

“This is my floor.” Shooter said.

“Me too.” Slider replied as he began to walk away. “Good hunting, kid.”

“Hey old man,” Shooter called out, bringing Slider to a halt, “Don’t go trying to win this one by yourself ok? I’m not ready to be C.A.G. yet.”

Slider considered his words for a moment then nodded wordlessly as he continued on.

He’d be coming back alright-- *when every last Alliance pilot had been blown from the sky.*

“Two minutes!” announced the pilot of the Colonial Assault shuttle from his position in the cockpit.

From his place in the back of the troop compartment, Lieutenant Allain Halloran gave the pilot a thumbs up in response before pulling down the tinted visor on the helmet of his Shadow II Battlearmor. He then stood up and gestured for everyone’s attention by holding his arms out in front of him, palms outward.

The rest of his team responded by mimicking the gesture.

“Stand up!” Halloran commanded and immediately the team stood in two rows of four men each facing each other.

Seeing that everyone was up and ready, Halloran said “Seal and cross check!”

Immediately the team sealed their visors and checked each other out to ensure that the front of their Battlearmor showed no signs of damage or malfunction. “Sound off for cross check!”

“Wolf One, okay”

“Wolf Two, okay”

“Wolf Three okay.”

The list continued until Halloran himself said “Wolf Leader okay. One minute to jump entry interface. Brace for contact.”

Immediately everyone reached up and grabbed onto the long metal bars that ran across the ceiling of the shuttle, jokingly referred to as the ‘Holy Frak’ handles. “Once we get the green light we’ll only have thirty seconds to clear the shuttle before they have to jump again, so be ready to go!”

Suddenly, Halloran felt the sickly twist of his stomach that always preceded an FTL jump. “Here we go!”

An instant later the team was jolted as the assault shuttle appeared in the upper atmosphere of Mars and began to shake violently as a result of the atmospheric entry.

In front of the team, who now faced towards the rear of this ship, the drop hatch sprang open and a green light flashed on.

“Go, Go, Go!” Halloran shouted as the team surged forward and out of the shuttle. Seeing his last trooper about to step out, Halloran followed and within a second found himself dropping from the sky, the quiet rush of air muffled by the sound dampening equipment in his helmet.

“Chute pull in one minute.” He announced over the com link that was built into his helmet as he checked his altimeter. “Remember to link up fast once you’re down.”

Halloran received no acknowledgement but then again, he didn’t need one. His team knew their jobs.

Five minutes later he was on the ground with his chute repacked and his gear ready. Taking his surroundings in quickly, he reached down to his left arm and used the touch pad there to activate the heads up display, or HUD, inside the faceplate of his helmet.

Switching on the locator function, he saw that his team had a tight dispersal area over a space of about five hundred meters. He then touched the button that told his team where he was and instructed them to rally on him.

It only took a few minutes for them to arrive.

“Weapons check.” He said after they had all arrived.

Each of his men was specially trained as commandos, assassins, saboteurs, terror and anti-terror operatives, having undergone some of the most brutal and intensive training imaginable over a period of two years. Yet back on Prometheus they assumed the guises of just normal crewman.

Blending in was part of their job.

The first one to respond to the weapons check call was Petty Officer Taylor, who was a shift leader in the Engine Room. He was also the communications specialist for the team. “One up and okay.” He said, giving the traditional response.

“Two up and okay.” This was Specialist Baxter, a computer systems tech that worked in the Prometheus computer core, and the team’s sniper.

“Three up and okay.” Replied Crewman Latham, a flight medic.

“Four up and ready to make something go *boom*.” This was Corporal Jones, one of the Marines and the team’s demolitions expert.

“Shut it, Four.” This was Gunnery Sergeant Howell, Halloran’s second in command. “Five up and okay sir.”

“Lead, up and okay.” Halloran replied as he loaded a round into his rifle. “One, fire the burst and start the clock. I’m on point. Five, you got the ass end. Let’s get it done.”

Halloran looked at his team and nodded. “Follow me.”

CHAPTER 3

IN MOTION

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS IN ORBIT OF GAS GIANT 1715-A SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

“All sections report condition one set, sir.” Maddie reported from her temporary station at Ops. “FTL is spun up and we are ready to jump.”

“Very well, start the jump clock: 5 minutes” Commander Turner replied turning to Major Horvath. “X.O., copy to the *Sentinel* and get another ETA from the *Vigilant*.”

“Aye sir.” Horvath replied as she activated her headset. “Attention on *Sentinel*, Jump clock at T-minus five minutes: *Mark*.”

“Acknowledged Prometheus. See you on the other side.” Came the female voice of Lieutenant Hatfield.

“Maddie, get Slider on the horn and patch it through to my headset.” Turner commanded.

Maddie flipped a switch. “CAG- Prometheus; Actual wants to speak with you.” She said pointing to Turner. “You’re on sir.”

Inside his cockpit, Slider flipped a switch and activated his com. “This is Slider, go ahead Actual.”

There was a pause on the line and the Turner’s deep, rich voice came through exuding confidence. “Be ready to provide escort for the shuttles coming from the surface. I have a feeling that the Alliance is going to be able to scare up reinforcements quickly.”

“Sounds like you’re expecting a trap, sir.” Slider replied grimly.

“I am. Be ready.”

“Roger that, sir. And don’t worry-- Our people are coming home if I have to blast every damn Alliance fighter out of the sky *myself*.”

Standing in C.I.C., Turner arched his eyebrow. Something about Slider’s voice...

“Secure this channel.” The commander ordered.

Maddie nodded. “Channel secure sir.”

“Slider,” Turner began, “Focus on your mission, son. I know you are still mourning but you can’t win this on your own and Sheba wouldn’t want you to die senselessly.”

“Sir, it’s—”

Turner cut him off. “You have a son waiting at home for you. He’s already lost his mother. He will *need* his father.”

Slider sat quietly in his cockpit as the soft yet powerful words from Commander Turner hit him with the force of a nuclear blast. Images of Sheba floated through his mind and he could clearly see them sitting together by the bank of the Agris River which ran outside the Flight Academy on Caprica.

It stirred the anger, the pain, his absolute rage that he felt over her death.

“You have to let it go.” He heard Turner say.

All of his memories boiled inside him like a black storm cloud ready to explode. The burning painful rage that fueled the fire in his heart threatened him with tears. Closing his eyes he inhaled deeply and held it.

And then, with an agonizing exhale-- he let her go.

“I understand, sir.” Slider finally replied. “I’ll see you when this is all over.”

“I look forward to it, Captain.” Turner replied. “Good hunting.”

**OFFICE OF THE PRIMUS
CITY OF ROMALIN
TERRA**

Rollo Thomasi took a moment to carefully re-read the report that had been placed in his hands by a young lieutenant. It read that a long range patrol had sighted what appeared to be two unknown ships in the 1715-A system, just two jumps from Mars.

Looking at the low resolution recon photos, he smiled as he realized that his long shot plan was actually coming to fruition. Against all conventional military wisdom, Jonathan Turner was going to try to rescue his captured warriors on Mars.

“What does it say?” asked Primus Verenos from across his desk.

“It would appear that our fallback plan has worked.” Thomasi replied.

Verenos straightened. “Turner is taking the bait?”

Thomasi nodded. “Indeed he is.”

Verenos sat back and allowed himself a smile. “It’s going exactly as you planned.”

Thomasi made no effort to conceal his pride. “Yes it did and if our plan succeeds then we gain credit as the ones who stopped Turner and saved the Alliance. If it fails, then we use it as fuel for the fire of the Crusader movement.”

Verenos chuckled. “Remind me never to play strategy games against you, old friend. You think far too many moves ahead for my taste.”

Thomasi nodded but said nothing. *That’s right old friend, remember who is the military brains behind this operation. Remember who it is that is indispensable to your plans...*

**CENTRAL CONTROL TOWER
IRONHOLD PENAL COLONY
MARS, TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Precentor Mikel Ladicus yawned, stretched and for the one hundredth time, lamented the bad luck and political misfortune that had landed him the worst assignment in the known universe.

On paper, commanding the premier penal colony in the Terran Alliance was a great honor, but for a man like Ladicus, who had spent his whole life clawing his way to the top so that he could one day command a fleet of Alliance Battlecruisers, it was the ultimate disgrace.

And why was he here? Because he had espoused Crusader sentiments to his commanding officer while in command of the Battlecruiser *Ice Dragon*.

How could he know that his fleet commander was a staunch Guardian? How could he know that the bastard would then report to Primus Antonius, another Guardian, that he was a political threat to Guardian dominance of the military?

Just like that, Ladicus' dreams of leading an Alliance fleet to conquer new worlds had evaporated. Now he was here, in the arm pit of the universe, commanding a penal colony where the chances for earning glory were slim to none.

Shaking his head in self pity, he took the bottle from his desk and opened it, taking a long pull of the burning contents inside.

Clink.

What was that? Ladicus thought to himself, setting the bottle down on his desk corner.

Clink, clink.

Now he was irritated. Someone outside his office was probably doing some sort of routine maintenance, but he had left strict orders not to be disturbed.

With an angry snarl on his lips, Ladicus stood and stormed to his door. *This time they will learn the hard way that when I give an order it is to be obeyed!*

The angry thoughts in his mind that dwelled on brutalizing whomever it was that was offending him died when his door opened to reveal several black armored men with weapons pointed in his face.

Before he could speak the lead man hit him in the gut with a brutal blow that drove the wind from him. Unable to even scream for help, Ladicus fell backwards onto his office floor as the black armored men flowed in like dark water around him.

Looking down, Halloran smiled inside his face plate at the damage Sergeant Howell had done to the self important man on the floor. "Pick *that* up," He ordered as he pointed to the Precentor.

Quickly, Howell hauled Ladicus to his feet and held him there while Halloran moved close, almost face to face, with the man.

"Hello Precentor. This is how it's going to go down: I'm going to ask you questions and you're going to give me answers."

"I'd rather roast in Hades!" Ladicus gasped.

“Oh you will, but not before you tell me *everything* I want to know.”

“What makes you think I’ll talk?”

Halloran chuckled as Howell produced a pair of nasty looking slip jointed bone scissors. “Because each time you lie to me, each time you don’t tell me what I want, my friend here will remove something dear to you. *And he won’t be quick about it.*”

Ladicus’ face paled as the image of these masked men removing parts of his body became real in his mind. “You are Colonial though,” he said, mustering as much courage as he could. “What about your vaunted sense of conscience and morality?”

Again, Halloran laughed low, menacingly. “Haven’t you heard,” he smiled. “We’re Black Berets. They didn’t issue us a conscience.”

**COMMAND CENTER
THERMOPALYE STATION
IN ORBIT OF THE MOON OF THERMOPALYE
CAPRICA SYSTEM**

Brigadier General John Connors, Commandant of the Special Operations Training Center on Caprica, looked out the viewport and was forced to admire the elegance of the Mercury Class Battlestar he saw in front of him. She was a beauty, with the lights from the orbital dock gleaming off her hull like diamonds.

As a career Marine officer, he should have had some familiarity with the Colonial Fleet but the truth was that he had served on a Battlestar only once as a young lieutenant and even then it hadn’t been for long.

In his second year in the Colonial Defense Force, he had been selected for the Colonial Special Operations Command and off he had gone. From there on, he had served first as a platoon commander in the Colonial Starborne Brigades, then onto being a company commander in the 3rd Marine Division. After that had come the big break he had always wanted: He had been selected to be one of the elite-- a Black Beret.

As a Black Beret he had commanded three Colonial Shadow Teams, the best of the best. Trained in terrorist and counter terrorist tactics, assassination protocols, kidnapping, armed assault, subversion and espionage, he was one of the most fierce killers in the C.D.F.

It had been only logical for him to be chosen to command the S.O.T.C. when the opportunity had come along and he had been glad to take it.

Now though, after two years on the job, he was uneasy. People who had been long time friends and allies were suddenly quiet. He didn't get any of the inside information from C.D.F. headquarters on Picon like he used to. No, something was up and he had a bad feeling that he was about to find out what.

“General Connors?”

He turned to find a severe looking woman with long dark hair and piercing eyes looking back at him as she entered the room. She wore the rank of a Rear Admiral and her posture spoke of someone who was used to command.

All in all, she looked like someone he could respect.

“Admiral.” Connors replied as he turned to greet her. “I was just taking a look at your ship outside. She's quite a beauty.”

“I'm afraid you're mistaken, general.” Admiral Helena Cain replied. “My ship, the Pegasus, is docked on the other side of the station.”

“Ah, my apologies. I just assumed that since we were meeting here, that you would want a view of your ship if possible.”

“Understandable.” Cain replied taking a breath, “But actually, she's going to be *your* ship.”

If it were possible for Connors to look confused, flabbergasted and angry all at once, the look on his face would have been sufficient to capture the emotions. “My ship? Why?”

Cain took a seat and gestured for him to join her. She produced a folder bearing the seal of the Colonial President. “These are your orders, from President Adar himself. You're being relieved of your command of the S.O.T.C. and being placed in command of the 1st Colonial Expeditionary Group.”

“Expeditionary Group? I don't understand.”

“You know of the Prometheus mission?” Cain asked.

“Of course, who doesn't? Pride of the fleet and all that.”

“Well not long after launch, the Prometheus found a habitable world not far beyond the red line. Surveys conducted on that world showed that it was ripe for colonization.”

Connors immediately saw where the conversation was going and dread clenched his gut. “You can't be serious.” He said flatly.

Cain nodded. As a career officer, she knew how he was feeling at that moment. Still, it was something he had brought on himself so she had little sympathy.

“You will assume command of the 1st C.E.G. in one week and begin preparations for a three year mission to establish a viable colony.”

Connors sat back and took a deep and steadying breath. “What if I refuse and retire? I have twenty years in service.”

Cain shook her head. “The President has already said he would deny your retirement request until after this mission is complete.”

“So either way, I’m frakked.” The general said.

Cain chuckled humorlessly. “Basically.”

Connors stood and returned to the window to look out on the ship he would soon be calling home. “When do I leave?”

“Six months.” Cain replied. “You will be assigned another Battlestar, two Gunstars and eight civilian transports. Once on the ground, you will become the governor general of the colony until relieved.”

“Great.” Connors replied.

Cain stood and walked to the viewport where she stood with him. “If it means anything, I’m sorry you got screwed with this.”

“Not your fault, Admiral.” Connors replied. “I brought this on myself.”

Cain nodded and turned towards the door. “I’m due back on my ship General, I hope you don’t mind if I take my leave.”

Connors waved her off. “No issue at all, Admiral.”

“Very well. Good luck out there, General.” Cain said as she marched from the observation room.

“Thanks.” Connors replied as he watched her leave.

Turning back to the view of the Battlestar *Eternal* he shook his head in frustration but only for a moment. He was a soldier first and foremost and he had been given a mission so he would do it.

But when that mission was over and he retired, a certain President was going to have some horribly bad publicity...

CHAPTER 4

BEGINNINGS OF CHAOS

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS INBOUND ORBIT OF MARS TERRAN ALLIANCE

“Jump complete, sir.” Major Horvath reported as she turned from the dradis screen to face Commander Turner. “We’re right where we wanted to be.”

“Launch Vipers and report all contacts.” Turner commanded.

“Aye sir.” Horvath replied activating her headset. “CAG- X.O.: Launch all Vipers.”

She nodded as she received acknowledgment in her earpiece. “Vipers launching now, sir.”

“Sir, I have two contacts on dradis.” Maddie reported from Operations. “Engine signature confirmed: Two Conqueror Class Battlecruisers.”

“Any fighters?” Horvath asked.

“Not yet sir—no, wait a second--” Maddie flipped a switch and focused in on one of the ships. “Yes sir, Conqueror two is launching fighters.”

Turner nodded. “Contact Sentinel and tell her to begin drop operations.”

“Yes sir.” Maddie replied.

“What about those fighters, sir?” Horvath asked.

“Tell Slider to close with and destroy.”

“Yes sir.” Horvath replied with a grim smile.

“Captain Reighney,” Turner said facing the Prometheus Weapons Officer, “What’s our range to target?”

“Sir, range is now ten thousand clicks and closing.” Reighney replied. “At current speed we will be in range for Snow Raven missiles in four minutes.”

“Recalculate for flank speed.”

“Aye sir.” Reighney said as she worked the math on her computer. “At flank speed we will be in range in two minutes, ten seconds.”

“All ahead flank, hold intercept course.” Turner said as he faced the helm officer.

“Hold course, all ahead flank, aye sir.” Captain Green replied.

“Sir, target vessel is now six thousand clicks away and beginning to maneuver.” Reighney reported.

“Target their engines with the Snow Raven missiles and stand by on main batteries. We need to make this quick, before they can send out a call for help.”

“Anything on the wireless yet, Maddie?” Horvath asked.

“No sir,” she replied, “in fact, I’m not getting anything but a beta pattern on the wireless.”

A smile crossed Turner’s face. “Looks like Colonel Hall made it after all. Send to Vigilant on coded net four alpha: ‘Welcome to the party. Target Bravo Constellation Two and immobilize.’”

“Aye sir.” Maddie replied.

The Prometheus plowed through space like a demon on the warpath. Her nose mounted missile tubes were open, giving the impression that she was a beast whose teeth were bared for combat.

In front of her, the entire compliment of Prometheus’ Viper squadrons, over a hundred Mark 7 Vipers made a direct course towards the enemy Accipiter class fighters.

In his cockpit, Slider gritted his teeth and allowed a warm hatred to come over him like he had never felt before. His eyes narrowed and he began to target ships he intended to kill.

“Ok, here they come.” He announced into his helmet mic. “Pick your targets, don’t leave your wingmen behind and don’t cut these frakkers any slack. Shooter, take two flights and hold back to protect the Barge. If they get past us, they’re all yours.”

“Shooter one five one seven, roger that. Bravo and Delta flights, fall back to rally point Constellation.” Said Captain Josh Wakefield.

Slider, satisfied with his arrangements, flipped over a switch to activate his targeting scanners. Inside his helmet his breath was hot and steady; his heart beat was fast and strong as the thrill of combat came over him. *This* was his element; *this* was where he was at his best and this would be the place where he would exact his *revenge*.

“All Vipers,” he snarled, “Weapons Free. Let’s go get ‘em!”

In the C.I.C., Turner watched on the dradis screen as his Viper squadrons clashed with the Alliance fighters sent to defend against them. He smiled as Alliance fighters began to wink out immediately.

“Sir, target vessel is now in range and missiles are locked on their engine plant.” Captain Reighney reported from the weapons station.

Turner nodded.

This was it. His blood was boiling now. His crew was on that planet and he was going to bring them home... and gods help anyone who got in his way.

“Open fire.”

Sheba looked out the window of her cell into the night sky. She didn’t know why, but awakened with the feeling that something big was going on and she couldn’t shake it no matter what she did.

Suddenly, she saw several streaks of light shoot across the night sky in straight lines, then a flash of light.

Smiling, she moved quickly to Colonel Ryan’s side and gently tapped him on the shoulder. “Wake up, sir.”

“Huh?” the injured Colonel asked. “Wh-what’s going on?”

“We need to be ready, sir.”

“What? Why?” asked Archangel as he moved closer.

Sheba couldn’t hide her excitement. “The Commander’s back.”

Allain Halloran looked at the now bloody and exhausted form of Precentor Ladicus and smiled. “See? That wasn’t so hard now was it?” he said as he wiped blood off of the set of tension wire cutters he held in his hand.

Ladicus, now missing two fingers off of his right hand, hung his head in defeat. “If you have any mercy, you’ll kill me now.”

Halloran cocked his head to the side as if in thought and then brought his masked face down to eye level with the captive man. “You’re right, if I had any mercy I would. But the truth is, I never had any to begin with and even if I had, what you have done to my shipmates would be enough to forget it.”

Snapping his fingers, he ushered the commando team out of the office. “I think I’ll let your vaunted Executors have a go at you-- pay you back for the hell you have put my friends through.”

Halloran walked out the door, leaving Ladicus to ponder just how agonizing the next few days of his drastically shortened life were going to be.

TO BE CONTINUED...