



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 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, 101<sup>st</sup> Viper Squadron "Aces"

Captain Joshua Wakefield: Commanding Officer, 82<sup>nd</sup> Viper Squadron "Knights"

Captain Michael "Archangel" Johnston: Commander, 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 54<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> Alliance Expansionary Fleet (Terran Sector)

# PROLOGUE

## Z + 57 MINUTES

Peaceful silence, like he was floating on a calm day in the black ocean of Arelon. That's what crossed Slider's mind as he drifted in his ejection seat out in the vast coldness of space as a vicious space battle played out before his eyes.

He felt angry even though there was no reason for him to be. He had managed to take out fourteen enemy fighters before a stray round through the cockpit destroyed his controls and sent shrapnel into his legs. It didn't matter though. He had wanted to finish this fight in his cockpit and taking down the enemy. He wanted to be the last thing that the enemy pilots saw before they ran away.

But instead he was floating in space like a piece of useless junk with frakked up legs.

It had been hard but he had been able to put the pressure seals and bandages on before he punched out of his stricken Viper. Thank the gods for that because it would have been a race to see if he bled out or asphyxiated first.

And he could think of many other methods for exiting the universe that were far more pleasant.

Part of him wished that he had gone up in a fireball, as he had seen on so many occasions. He could see it: His ship flying apart around him, the brief conflagration caused by the engine reactors overloading and igniting the fuel combined with the small pocket of oxygen in the cockpit.

*Better to burn out than to fade away* his favorite singer had once said.

But had he done that, he wouldn't have been able to cause the damage he had before punching out.

*That* brought a smile to his face

After his controls had been destroyed he had seen that his engines were still throttled open full and that the Alliance cruiser he had been strafing only moments before was still in sight.

It had been difficult, trying to guide his craft with just the foot pedals as he quickly placed the pressure wraps on his injured legs, but it had been worth it. Just seconds before impact he had punched out and rocketed away from his stricken craft, smiling as it impacted right where the bridge was located.

He had even seen two people get sucked out through the small hole in the armor that his ship had left. *Wish I could have seen the look on their faces just before it hit* he thought.

If they weren't dead already, the last few moments of their lives would be extremely painful as their blood boiled and sought escape in any way it could while their lungs froze solid. It wasn't a nice way to go, but Slider didn't care. They all deserved it in his eyes.

These bastards had taken away the only woman he had ever really loved, the mother of his child. What was worse was that he hadn't been able to say how he felt before she died.

His pride had taken from him the only chance he had at happiness.

Now all he wanted to do was join her in the peaceful, calm afterlife but he couldn't. He had to survive. He had a son that he needed to return home to. A little boy who would need him in the coming years as he began to ask questions like, 'Why didn't mommy tell you about me?' or 'How did mommy die?'

It was up to him now to answer those. He had already shied away from his love once because of his pride. He would be damned if he did it again.

Looking down, Slider caught sight of something that immediately made him take notice.

His pressure seal was leaking.

On his left leg, droplets of blood froze instantly as they crept out from the edge of the pressure seal along with wisps of vapor that he knew to be his oxygen supply.

First he had blacked out from the ejection, now he had awakened only to find himself dying slowly.

"Well isn't this a wonderful end to a frakked up day."

# CHAPTER 1

## ZERO HOUR

His name was Mikel Ladicus. Until a few moments earlier he had been the undisputed master of the Ironhold Penal Colony on Mars. Now, as Alliance guards cut him loose from the chair he had been bound in, he realized that he was nothing more than a walking dead man.

The man in front of him wore the long flowing black and silver trimmed robes of an Alliance Executor. Under his cowl, the face of Tyranus Bane was one of scorn and disgust.

“You gave them the codes to access the Orbital Defense Grid.” Bane snarled. “How else have you managed to betray us you filthy coward?”

Ladicus stood upright, his bandaged hand still dripping blood from where two of his fingers had been forcibly removed. “I am still a Precentor in the Alliance Military, Executor. You *will* show proper respect.”

“You are a weak coward who broke under the most *trivial* of pain and as an Alliance Executor, I am fully authorized to relieve you of your command and execute you here and now for your failure.”

“Then do it.” Ladicus snarled back.

Bane was momentarily taken aback by his show of defiance. The man knew he has screwed up but he was unafraid. He was ready to face his fate for what he had done. It almost made Bane admire him.

Almost.

“No, I won’t kill you yet. The Orbital Defense controls have been destroyed and we have reports of Colonial troops landing somewhere close by. You are still the only reasonably competent officer we have here so you will have a chance to redeem yourself, Precentor.”

Ladicus was thunderstruck but it didn’t take him long to recover his wits. “Good, now kindly get the hell out of my way. I have a battle to win.”

Bane watched him as he left. “Yes, you do.”

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Colonel Nigel Alexander braced himself as the Gunstar Sentinel set down gently on her four massive pylon landing legs.

“Report.” He commanded after the ship had stopped vibrating.

“Sir, landing operation is complete. All four pylons are secure and the flight pod is deploying.” Reported Lieutenant Jennifer Hatfield, the Sentinel’s operations officer.

“Very well, inform Major Tompkins to proceed with deployment and have our gunners begin over watch.”

“Yes sir.”

“And contact the flagship. Let them know our situation and request some fighter cover.”

On the flight deck of the Sentinel, Major Tompkins marveled at how different it was to stand somewhere that was normally open to vacuum with nothing on but his uniform.

“Sir, you are go for deployment.” Said the voice of Lieutenant Hatfield in his ear piece.

“Roger that,” he replied. “Ok everyone, mount up!”

On command, five hundred marines gathered on the deck and began to climb into the Landram II assault vehicles that had risen from the launch elevators only moments before.

Climbing into the specially designed command and control vehicle, he secured himself in a chair that was surrounded by display screens, each of which gave him a piece of the tactical puzzle he had to coordinate.

“Ten seconds until flight pod touch down sir.”

“Very well,” he responded as he flipped over to the general command channel. “Ten seconds until deployment. Stay in your teams and make sure you account for everyone. We’re not leaving anyone behind this time.”

The vehicle vibrated as the flight pod touched down on the solid surface of Mars and Tompkins went into action. “Driver, move out. All vehicles, follow me.”

From the C.I.C. of the Sentinel, Colonel Alexander watched on his monitors as the tan colored Landram II assault vehicles began rolling out of the flight bay and onto the dusty surface of Mars.

It would be morning soon so they had to move quickly. The Shadow Team had done its work, or so it had been reported. The assault force wouldn't be expecting any resistance that would be worth anything. At least, not right away.

At times like these, Alexander was always reminded of something his first C.O. had told him so many years prior: *No plan, no matter how well thought out, survives first contact with the enemy.*

Over the years he had found that saying to be true most of the time. This time, however, he hoped that it would be one of those rare occasions when his old C.O. had been wrong.

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### **Z + 5 MINUTES**

“Sir, Slider reports that several flights of fighters have broken through the main line.” Maddie reported from Ops as another impact caused the mighty Prometheus to shudder under her feet.

“Contact Shooter and tell him to take them out.” Major Horvath, the acting X.O., replied.

“Sir, Conqueror One is coming broadside to us.” said Captain Karen Reighney from the Weapons coordinator console.

“Trying to hide her damage from that last Snow Raven salvo.” Turner said.

“They must be hurt bad to expose their flight bays to us like that.” Horvath replied. “I think there's an opportunity here to put her out of the fight for good.”

Turner nodded. “I agree. Mister Reighney, lock batteries one and two onto Conqueror One's flight bay and open fire.”

“Aye sir.” Reighney replied. “Solution locked in. Firing.”

The Prometheus' main guns lit up with the massive firepower they contained. The Kinetic Energy Weapons, commonly known as railguns, hurtled the explosive rounds in straight lines that streaked towards the exposed flank of the Alliance Battlecruiser.

Slider was in awe momentarily as he saw the salvo slam into the Alliance Battlecruiser. The projectiles plowed into the side of the ship sending brief plumes of fire out from decompressing hull breaches and shards of armor and debris spinning away in lazy circles.

Then it happened.

As technologically advanced as the Prometheus was, the truth is that there was no way to guide a N.A.C. 10 round into its target. Unlike a missile, once it was fired, it was going whichever way it was pointed and no corrections were allowed.

Therefore, when Captain Reighney had said she had a lock, it wasn't necessarily a lock on the flight bay itself. It was a lock on that region of the ship that was still moving. But one lucky N.A.C. shot did just fine as it sailed into the open flight bay and landed on the deck, just behind the fuel cells.

The detonation was indescribable.

Slider watched with mixed emotions of horror and angry pride as the Conqueror's fuel pods erupted first into the empty flight bay and then through it, splitting the ship all but in half.

Smaller sympathetic explosions began erupting all over the ship as her drive engines failed and she began a slow spiral towards the planet.

In the C.I.C. of the Prometheus, cheers erupted as the first ship began to fall to her death. Turner allowed it for a moment because the crew needed it. These were the people who had been brutalized at the hands of the enemy who were dying in front of them.

It might be morbid, but it was justified.

"Sir!" Reighney called out over the cheering.

Turner looked but couldn't see who it was who was calling him over the noise and raised hands. "Quiet down."

Nobody heard him except Maddie who took it on herself to get things back in order.

"Shut the frak up!" she shouted, bringing the celebration to a screeching halt. "We're still fighting so get back to your stations and get focused!"

Quietly, the crew returned to their work and soon the hum of battle returned.

"Sir, I have new contacts." Captain Reighney announced.

"Confirmed." Maddie added. "Two Conqueror and two Venator class ships just jumped in."

"What are they doing?" asked Major Horvath as she moved alongside Maddie.

“The Conquerors are making a bee line for us sir. The Venators are breaking off into a search pattern.” Reighney reported.

“They’re looking for the *Vigilant*.” Turner said. “Contact Colonel Hall and tell him he is free to go evasive but that I need him to keep that jamming screen up as long as possible.”

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### Z+ 7 MINUTES

Allain Halloran moved swiftly and silently keeping his team close as they made their way through the darkened prison yard.

Stopping quickly, he held up his hand and flattened himself against a building wall, his squad doing likewise as a beam of light from one of the watch towers swept past them.

Looking up, Halloran could see the battle in space beginning as brief flashes of light illuminated the night sky. Part of him wished he was up there as he had gotten quite comfortable in his role as the Prometheus Operations officer.

That was just a side job though, being a Black Beret and skulking around in the darkness was what he did best.

*I am the nightmare in the dark he thought to himself silently. Others rest peacefully in their beds because I stand ready to do violence on their behalf. I am the nightmare in the dark, the reason the unjust can't sleep at night. I am righteous vengeance, justified violence, the great equalizer. I always accomplish the mission and I never leave anyone behind. I don't seek fortune, I don't seek fame. I do it for myself, my Gods and my people. I am a quiet professional and man of honor. I am a Black Beret.*

As he finished reciting the creed of the Black Beret in his head his thoughts came back into focus, as they usually did when he recited the words he had first spoken a year earlier when he had first graduated from the Special Operations Training Center on Caprica.

During the ceremony, General John Connors, the Training Center Commandant, had told them that no matter what happened in the future, no matter what assignment they took on as a cover, they must never forget that their mission as Black Berets came first.

Connors had been a mentor, even a father like figure, to Halloran during those 12 long and hellish months at the academy and so he took special note of the man's words.

*He hit it right on the head.*

“Okay, the assault force should be on their way by now. We need to wire the barracks to blow before they get here so lets’ get on that.” Halloran ordered.

“What about those light towers?” asked Wolf Three.

“I’ll handle those sir.” Said Wolf Two.

“Okay,” Halloran agreed, “But do it quietly. We don’t want to start this party before we have to.”

“Well, we already took out the Orbital Defense, Communications and alarm systems so their response time should go straight to hell.” Said Wolf Four.

“Yeah, but when you start making things go boom, it won’t take a genius to figure out what’s going on and pass the word.” Said Wolf Five, the team sergeant named Howell.

“Ohhhh Sarge, you’re giving me a hard on over here taking about stuff going boom.” Four replied.

“Save it for the demo job, Four.” Halloran said checking his watch one last time. “Okay Three, you take your med pack and track down Colonel Ryan. It’s your job to make sure he gets out ok. Sarge, I want you to cover him.”

“Who’s going to cover you?” Howell asked.

Halloran smiled. “I’m with *boom-boom* over here. We’re going to play a game called ‘How many Alliance troops can we turn into instant mulch’.”

“Sounds like my kind of game sir.” Four chimed in.

“Ok sir but watch him,” Howell said with a smirk behind his mask, “he gets a little too excited around explosives, if you know what I mean.”

“Don’t worry Sarge, I brought plenty of tissues to clean up with this time.” Four replied.

They all chuckled briefly while they made snide comments about how sick Four was and even some disparaging remarks about being an inbred from Geminon. Finally, the men became quiet as the importance of the moment became real to them

“Good hunting guys,” Halloran said breaking the silence, “Let’s go *get* some.”

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## CHAPTER 2

### ROLLING THUNDER AND POURING RAIN

John Connors stood in his office and looked outside the window at the rain falling on the Special Operations Training Center. It was a brutal storm outside, but par for the course for this small island in the southern hemisphere of Caprica.

He smiled seeing the recruits outside in the mud doing exercises. The training officers, known euphemistically as Falconers for the ruthless manner in which they trained and culled the cadets, were pushing them to roll and crawl on their bellies in the mud while keeping up their motivation.

Looking down at his clock, he saw that the Falconers had already had them out there for two hours. *Two more hours and we can let them come back inside* he thought to himself.

He chuckled to himself as he realized he was actually going easy on the cadets. Normally, six hours in the mud was an average day on his watch.

He shook his head. *Must be getting soft in my old age.*

Of course, he knew that it wasn't him going soft, or even old age that was on his mind. It was his new assignment.

Upon returning from the meeting with Admiral Cain, he had immediately patched a call into Picon to talk to Admiral Nagala, an old friend of his.

Nagala had told him that the orders were firm and had indeed come from the Vice President, whom Connors had made the mistake of criticizing to someone whom he thought had been a friend.

So yes, he would be going on the mission to this uncharted world to settle it and act as it's Governor-General for a year but he had been given a reprieve of sorts in that he wasn't required to relinquish command of the S.O.T.C. until a month prior to his departure.

That, Nagala had argued, would give fleet command enough time to select a suitable replacement. After all, filling the shoes of John Connors wasn't going to be easy.

Turning away from the sight outside his window, Connors looked around the old office that he had made his own for the past three years. Decorated in wood paneling and with the feel of a cabin rather than an office, it reminded him of his home outside of the city of Looteria back on Leonon.

Shaking his head to clear it, Connors turned to his desk and decided to attack the paperwork he had been putting off for the prior two days. It was nothing more than the usual status reports and training schedules but he had taken the last two days to tour the facility and get a first hand look at the training going on.

He had always been a hands-on kind of guy and he hadn't changed any just because he was a Brigadier General. *The best way to get the feel of your men is to get dirty with them* he had always told his officers and he was one to lead by example.

"Sir, I have a call from Thermopylae Station for you." His orderly announced over the office intercom interrupting his thoughts.

"Put it through." Connors replied taking a deep breath.

A short burst of static followed by a deep voice cut through the silence of Connors office. "Sir, this is Commander Aileen Tajalle of the Battlestar Eternal."

Connors nodded. "Yes Commander, it's good to speak with you. I assume you got the transfer of flag orders from Admiral Cain?"

"Yes sir." Tajalle replied, her voice flat.

"I assume you aren't too happy about this?" Connors ventured.

There was a slight pause. "Going off into the unknown to baby sit civilians for a year wasn't exactly what I had in mind, no sir."

"I don't blame you Commander." Connors replied. "However, we can discuss our reservations another time. I assume you called to schedule the command inspection?"

"Yes sir." Tajalle said, her voice sounding relieved to be talking about something other than her distaste for the mission. "Would tomorrow be a bad time? I am sending my crew on extended shore leave at the end of the week and I would rather do this before they go."

"Makes sense," Connors replied. "I'll take a shuttle out to you in the morning, say 0900?"

"That works sir. See you in the morning."

"Oh, and Commander-- no big receptions please. I hate giving inspections so we can keep this one below the dradis screen if you like."

Tajalle chuckled. "Fine by me sir. See you in the morning. Eternal Actual, out."

*Great, that's all I need* he thought. *A ship commander who is just as pissed about this assignment as I am.*

With that thought in his head, Connors leaned back in his chair, exhaled deeply and wondered for the hundredth time just what the hell he had done to deserve his fate.

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### **Z + 13 MINUTES**

“Sir, *Vigilant* reports that Venator One is vectoring in on their position.” Major Horvath reported as she examined the latest dispatches from the various sections as well as the *Vigilant* and *Sentinel*.

“Damn, they’re moving in fast.” Maddie commented as she coordinated the fight from her Operations station. “I don’t understand. The *Vigilant* has her stealth field up. They should look like a big nothing in space on dradis.”

“The Alliance has eyes out there somewhere.” Turner said.

“But how? I don’t detect any ships out there.” Maddie replied.

“Then it has to be something passive, something that isn’t using a lot of power.” Horvath said.

“Like a powered down ship?” asked Captain Green from the helm officer’s station.

“No, it would be too close. The *Vigilant* would have seen it.” Maddie replied.

Turner stroked his chin in that manner that told Horvath that he was thinking hard about the problem. Finally he shook his head. “There has to be a tracking device on the ship.”

“Wouldn’t the stealth field jam it?” Horvath asked.

“No, the Guardian Stealth Field only nullifies the emissions from the ship, ones it’s been trained to detect. If there is a tracking device on the ship that is putting out a signal the most the G.S.F. would do is diffuse it so they couldn’t get a solid lock on it.” Maddie explained.

“But once they got close enough they wouldn’t need a lock.” Turner stated flatly as he activated his headset. “*Vigilant*, this is Prometheus Actual: Change of mission follows.”

A moment of static over the speakers and then the gruff voice of Colonel Hall replied. "Prometheus Actual, this is Vigilant Actual. Change of mission acknowledged. Standing by for orders."

"Vigilant, Prometheus: Stand down from Coms Interdiction and go full evasive. We believe you have been marked with a tracking device. Use whatever means necessary to defend yourself."

Turner heard Hall cuss in the background. He knew the old hard as nails colonel would be angry about someone getting a device on his ship. "Understood Actual, committing now."

"Good hunting. Prometheus out." Turner said as he turned to Horvath. "X.O., contact the C.A.G. and have him dispatch a flight of Vipers to assist *Vigilant*."

"Just a flight, sir?"

"The main fight's here. They'll want to keep their birds where the scrap is going down." Turner remarked. "One flight will be enough to keep that second destroyer from becoming a problem."

In his cockpit, Slider listened to the instructions from Prometheus and looked at his tactical monitor. All of his fighters were involved in a nasty scrap occurring off the starboard bow of the second cruiser, but not all of them were actively engaged.

Touching his pad he called up Captain Graves, the C.O. of the 87th Fighter Squadron. "Gold Six, CAG. I need you to send a flight outbound to help out the *Vigilant*."

"Roger that." Graves replied. "I'll send Charlie flight since all they're doing strafing runs on that second Conqueror."

"That works. CAG out."

Flipping his screen back to dradis, Slider saw that the two new Battlecruisers were spitting out loads of fresh fighters and that they were speeding directly at his own.

Thinking quickly he activated his general channel. "Red squadron, Green squadron: form up and move against those incoming fighters. Blue and Gold: I want you to keep those fighters contained and prevent link up. Above all else, I want them contained and away from the big boys."

Getting acknowledgements, Slider turned his Viper towards the new threat and accelerated at full speed, eager to start the hunt anew.

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## Z + 17 MINUTES

Allain Halloran made a quick check of his watch and looked over his shoulder at Corporal Jones, who was just completing the wiring job on the explosives he had placed on the building next to them.

“Step on it Four, we’re at Z plus seventeen. The assault force will be here any minute.” Halloran whispered.

“One more second sir.” Four replied as he plugged one last wire in. “Ok, set.”

“Wolf team, Wolf Six,” Halloran whispered into his headset, “Condition One set. Stand by for—”

That was when the alarm went off.

All around the two men, lights began to come on as the wailing siren woke sleepy personnel and alerted them to impending danger.

“Frak! The gig’s up folks! Execute your missions now!” Halloran commanded as he hefted his rifle to his shoulder and started running. “Four, blow it as soon as we’re clear!”

Halloran and Four dived behind a dirt pile just as a guard exited from the building they had just been taking cover behind and leveled his rifle at them.

“Now!” Halloran shouted.

As Four slammed his hand down on the detonator button of his remote, that building and several others evaporated in a shower of fire and debris as the plastic explosives that they had set erupted in fiery death blossoms.

Above them, shots rang out as the other members of their team went into action taking out their assigned targets.

“Wolf Team, sound off.” Halloran commanded as he took in the chaotic situation.

“Three here, I found the colonel but he has company. Going to have to clean house a bit before I can extract.” Wolf Three answered. “Standby.”

The sounds of breathing followed by two silenced round and the collapse of bodies carried through over the headset mic that Wolf Three was wearing. Halloran smiled as he listened to his subordinate work.

“Ok, guards are down but there’s a lot of activity here.” Three reported.

“I know, someone activated the manual alarms.” Halloran replied. “Get the Colonel and get to the E.P.”

“Roger.” Three replied.

“All units: start finding our guys and getting them to the extraction point.” Halloran commanded as he began to hear the sounds of heavy weapons fire off in the distance. “Sounds like the cavalry is almost here so let’s get a move on this.”

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### **Z + 20 MINUTES**

“All hands brace for contact.” Major Horvath commanded as she watched yet another salvo of enemy fire streak towards the ship.

“What’s the enemy count now?” Turner asked as he braced himself for the impact.

“Sir, I have three Battlecruisers and two Destroyers still active in the fight.” Maddie reported. “Conqueror one is still in a low decaying orbit and Conqueror two is in bad shape.”

“Fighters?” Horvath pressed as the deck heaved under them.

“Impact on the number three dorsal power regulator!” Reported an engineering chief petty officer. “Rerouting through the auxiliary regulator.”

“Make sure you keep power stable in those sections.” Captain Briedis said as he studied the engineering situation board. “Last thing we need is to have the fuel pumps going out on the starboard flight pod.”

“Commander, we have a problem here.” Said Captain Reighney from her post at the helm.

“See to it.” Turner said to Horvath as he turned to the weapons officer. “Mr. Green, target Conqueror two and take her out of the fight.”

“If I do that sir, I’ll have to divert fire from Conqueror three and four and they’re burning hard for us.” Green replied.

Turner nodded. “I realize that but they’re still at long range and easier to deal with.”

“Aye sir, diverting fire now.”

“Commander, we have a problem.” Horvath said from the helm station.

“What now X.O.?” Turner replied as he moved to her.

“Sir, we are in a starboard lateral spin moving at five degrees a minute.” Horvath reported as Turner stepped up to her.

“I assume this is something that isn’t of your doing?” Turner asked looking at his helm officer.

“Yes sir. In fact, we’re having to fight to keep us on a straight course and it’s getting more difficult.” Reighney replied.

“Briedis, what are the bow maneuvering thrusters looking like?” Turner asked as he faced his engineering chief.

“All forward maneuvering thrusters are green sir, no damage.” Briedis reported.

“Then what’s causing this spin?” Horvath asked.

Briedis looked deep in thought for a second and then raised his eyebrows in surprise as the answer dawned on him. “Sir, I need someone to do an over flight of the engine section and see if there is any damage.”

“Wouldn’t the engineering board show it?” Horvath asked.

“Not necessarily. We’ve been having some trouble with the external sensors aft of frame two twenty one since we reclaimed the ship and we haven’t been able to pin down the cause.”

Turner nodded and activated his headset. “CAG, this is Prometheus Actual.”

“Go for CAG sir.” Slider replied, his voice distorted by the radio signal.

“Slider, can you spare someone to do a damage survey flight over the aft section of the ship?”

“Yeah, I can spare me. I’m not tied up at the moment.” Slider replied. “Give me thirty seconds and I’ll report back.”

“Roger that, standing by.”

In his fighter, Slider activated the frequency to his four squadron commanders. “All Six elements, I am going off the net. Actual needs a set of eyes on the aft of the ship. Shooter, you have it until I return.”

“Copy that.” Shooter replied.

Grasping his stick and throttle, Slider flipped the Viper 180 degrees and extended his thrust to maximum. It took only a few second before he was approaching the aft section of the ship but even at that distance he could see something wrong.

Very wrong.

“Prometheus-- Slider, I think I found your problem.” He said as he opened the channel. “About halfway down the top dorsal engine you have a burn through in the thruster shielding. You’re venting drive plasma, starboard lateral.”

“Roger Slider. Thanks.” Turner’s voice replied.

“No problem Prometheus, returning to- FRAK!”

Slider suddenly lurched back as his cockpit seemed to suddenly explode on him.

“Ahhhh! Gods damn it!” he yelled as his cockpit filled with smoke and alarms blared around him.

“Slider-- Prometheus. What’s wrong?” asked the concerned voice of Major Horvath.

“Just took a hit in my cockpit.” Slider replied as the smoke began to vent out through cracks in the cockpit canopy. “Shit, I got shrapnel in my legs.”

“Punch out. We’ll have a rescue Raptor there in a few minutes.” Horvath replied.

“No, I can handle it. Just give me a second to put pressure wraps on my legs.”

Inside, Horvath waited anxiously as she listened to the battle outside. *Frak, I should be out there* she thought to herself.

“X.O., he’s accelerating away from Prometheus.” Maddie said from the Ops station.

“Slider-- X.O.: I’m showing you accelerating away from the ship.”

“Yeah, my throttle’s jammed open.” Slider responded.

“Ok, that’s it then. Punch out now.” Horvath ordered.

“Sorry X.O., I got a better idea.” Slider replied as he tightened the last strap on his pressure dressings. “Keep that rescue Raptor warm though, I’m probably going to need it shortly.”

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Major Tompkins checked his map screen again as the sound of heavy gunfire came from outside his Landram's turret.

"Sitrep." He commanded as he opened a general channel.

"Contact with the enemy on the left flank sir. Alpha four and Alpha five are engaging time now." Came the voice of one of his lieutenants.

"Very well. Secure that flank quickly." Tompkins said as he looked out his periscope at the approaching prison walls. "I make out several silhouettes along the south wall Jack. What do you see?"

"Same thing sir. No spotlights or weapons fire though. I'd say it's a safe bet that our friends accomplished their mission." The gruff voice Sergeant Major John "Blackjack" Talbot replied from his own Landram that was riding along side.

"Agreed, we'll proceed as planned," Tompkins replied. "Bravo Six, this is Alpha Six: You are a go to assault the gate. Con Six, Alpha Six: I make several targets on top of the south wall. Close with and eliminate."

Tompkins received his acknowledgements and activated the link to his Landram driver. "Flank speed to the gate."

The massive wave of Landram II Assault Vehicles surged ahead as they rounded the final dunes and closed in on the front of the prison facility.

"All units: We are a go for this operation. Close in and eliminate any resistance. Once inside, form a perimeter as planned and dispatch your search teams. We'll have ten minutes on the ground until we pull back people so be quick about it or be dead."

## CHAPTER 3

### WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

#### Z + 29 MINUTES

“C’mon you ugly frak beast!” Slider growled as he attempted to keep his Viper level and on course using just his foot pedals. His legs screamed in pain because of the shrapnel wounds but he blocked it out of his mind as he focused in on his target.

“Whoa!” he shouted as he slammed his foot down on the left pedal, causing the Viper to roll to avoid a stream of anti-spacecraft fire that was pouring from his target towards him. “Damn, these guys are getting more accurate.”

Slider had been forced to use his pedals to try and steer his ship due to the fact that the rounds that had nearly shredded his cockpit had also destroyed most of his avionics controls.

Now he was speeding at full thrust towards a Conqueror Battlecruiser and doing his best to stay on course. Of course, the ship wasn’t exactly a small target so it wasn’t as difficult as one might think. The hardest part was avoiding the incoming fire.

*Just a couple more minutes and your ass is going down!*

\*\*\*

“Colonel Ryan!”

The voice was unfamiliar but had been preceded by two quick and silent shots that had dropped their guards like wet sacks of meat so Sheba decided to take a chance and respond.

“Over here!” She shouted. “The Colonel’s hurt bad. We need to get him out of here.”

Sheba almost jumped back as an armored and masked man yanked open the cell door using the key card he had taken off of one of the dead guards. “Captain Percival?” he asked, his voice sounding confused.

“Yeah. Let me guess: You thought I was dead.”

The black armored man nodded. “Well-- *yeah.*”

“Imagine that.” She rolled her eyes. “The Colonel is over here.”

“I’m a medic sir,” he said as he handed her his assault rifle. “Can you help cover the door? I’ll check him out.”

Sheba took the rifle and trained it out the door. “Give your sidearm to Archangel there.”

Looking up the Black Beret saw Archangel emerge from the shadows of the cell with a large iron bar in his hand. “Sorry, had to be sure you were friendly.” Archangel said as he dropped the improvised melee weapon.

“No problem sir.” The Black Beret replied as he handed him his sidearm.

“Nice piece.” Archangel commented as he flicked the safety off and took up a position to cover Sheba. “You have a name son?”

“We’re Black Berets sir. No names.”

“What do we call you then?” Sheba asked from the doorway.

“I’m Wolf Three, he’s Wolf Five sir.” He replied as he began to tend to Colonel Ryan’s wounds. “I’ll have the Colonel stabilized in a few minutes. Be ready to move.”

“Never been so ready in my life.” Sheba replied. “Is Captain Allen with you?”

“No, he’s acting CAG right now.”

Stacie smiled. Jason was a good pilot and leader so she knew the battle overhead was in good hands. She couldn’t wait to see him and tell him...

No, that could wait until later.

\*\*\*

### **Z + 31 MINUTES**

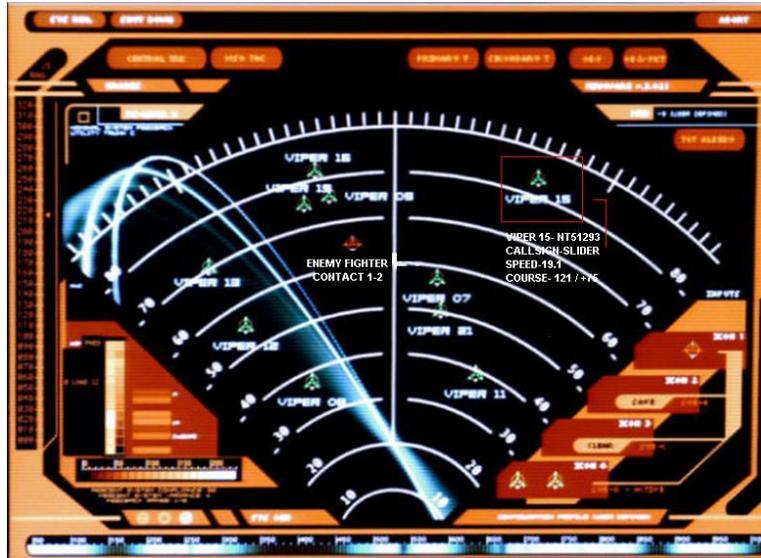
“Slider! Slider respond!” Maddie implored over her headset wireless. “I lost him.”

“Keep tracking him on dradis Maddie and have the search and rescue Raptor standing by.” Commander Turner said as he turned to face his X.O. “Get with Captain Briedis and handle that burn through.”

“Aye sir.” They both replied at once.

The commander studied the dradis readout for a second then turned back to Maddie. “Isolate Slider and pipe his details down here.”

Using a light pen, Maddie touched Slider's dradis signal and pushed a button that zoomed in on his section.



She then transferred the screen to the commander's personal readout where he studied it carefully trying to glean his intent.

"Widen the range by one hundred Maddie." He said as he furrowed his brows in concentration.

"Done sir." She replied as the deck beneath them vibrated with another hit.

"Sir, we just lost the port side bow dradis sensor!" Captain Briedis announced.

"They probably hit the computer hub in that section. Have a tech squad get down there and get it back online as soon as possible." Turner replied quickly. "Helm, come left twenty degrees and give me fifteen down angle on the bow planes."

"Aye sir." Captain Reighney replied.

And then it suddenly occurred to Turner what Slider was trying to do. "Maddie, locate the nearest Battlecruiser on Slider's trajectory."

Maddie checked her dradis read quickly and found what she was looking for. "Conqueror Three on a bearing of one twenty one karem positive seventy five; range is ten thousand."

"That's it then." Turner said as he turned to face his weapons officer. "Mister Green, give me a fire lane down Slider's axis and do your best not to hit him."

"Yes sir."

“Sir, we’ve shut down Thruster One and stopped the burn through. Going to play hell with navigation though.” The X.O. reported from the engineering board.

“It will have to do until we repair it.” Turner replied. “Maddie, send a signal to Colonel Alexander and tell him to get a move on.”

\*\*\*

### **Z + 35 MINUTES**

Tyranus Bane studied the map board and saw that the situation was indeed grave. While he had been able to restore the alert system, the heavy auto weapons that were mounted on the colony walls were still inoperative as well as the anti-aircraft guns.

“How many soldiers have we lost?” Asked Precentor Ladicus from behind him.

“We lost seventy percent of our soldiers when the barracks exploded sir.” A Kommandant named Hertzler replied.

“Seems that the enemy has thought this operation through to the last detail.” Bane remarked casually. “No doubt they had information about the colony and its defenses before hand.”

“No doubt.” Ladicus replied as he turned to one of his subordinates. “Send Trinary Delta to reinforce the walls and have whatever troops we have left post guard on the prisoner barracks.”

“Yes sir!”

“Sir, our scouts report a large armored column moving on the colony.” A voice said from one of the numerous radio terminals in the command center.

“Give me numbers.” Ladicus ordered.

“At least a full battle cluster sir.” The tech replied.

“At least thirty machines.” Bane said. “Without the heavy weapons on the walls we won’t have any hope of repelling them. Yes, it seems our enemy has planned this well.”

“I still have a surprise left for them.” Ladicus said with a smile. “Has Trinary Delta deployed yet?”

“No Precentor.”

“Good. Tell them to equip themselves with anti-armor rockets and to prepare to repel armored vehicles.”

“Yes Precentor!”

“Soldiers with Anti-Armor rockets won’t be able to stop a force of that size, Precentor.” Bane said.

“Then we will have to reduce the numbers to something a little more in our favor, won’t we?” Ladicus replied with a sinister grin. “Kommandant Hertzler! Contact Hauptman Tertius and tell him to target anything in front of the colony gates.”

“Yes sir!” Hertzler replied.

Bane arched his eyebrow in curiosity. “Something new that Central Command is unaware of?”

“Yes.” Ladicus replied as he folded his arms across his chest. “We had several hidden heavy gun emplacements installed above the compound in case of such a heavy frontal attack last month. We kept them manual so that we could fall back on them in case the auto defense computer failed.”

“Why wasn’t Central Command notified of this?” Bane asked.

“They were, Executor. There was a level nine security classification placed on the information however, and I’m sorry to say, that far supersedes yours.”

Bane nodded approvingly. “You might find yourself in not such a bad situation after all, Precentor. I might even forget to mention to central the fact that you broke under duress.”

Ladicus’ prideful sneer was wiped clean by the words of the dark executor and Bane took pride in that. Such was the power of an Alliance Executor. Even the mighty could fall before him.

“Show me the camera outside Colonel Ryan’s cell.” Bane commanded.

His lips tightened and his eyes narrowed as the scene on the screen changed from the front gate to an open cell door with two dead guards and no one inside.

“It seems your elite Crimson Guardsmen have run afoul of the enemy.” Ladicus said with a smirk.

Bane didn’t respond to the jibe by the Precentor, though Ladicus knew that the Executor had to be shaking with rage. “Contact my detachment and have them meet me

in corridor three twelve!” he snapped as he whirled and stormed out of the command center.

Ladicus smiled and tossed a half hearted salute at the back of the retreating Executor. “As you command.”

\*\*\*

### **Z + 40 MINUTES**

“Alpha Six! Alpha Six! This is Bravo Six! We are taking fire! I say again we are taking fire!”

Major Tompkins turned in his seat and flipped the switch to activate his radio mic. “Bravo Six, Alpha Six. Give me a Sitrep, over.”

“Alpha Six, Bravo Six: We started hitting the gate but we came under heavy indirect fire sir! We’re falling back right now but we have no cover and the enemy dismounts on the wall have anti-tank rockets.”

“Damn.” Tompkins breathed. “Any casualties?”

“We’ve lost two Vehicles with all hands.”

“Frak!” Tompkins snarled. “Ok, pull back and stand by.”

“Roger.”

Thinking quickly, Tompkins activated the com-uplink to Prometheus.

“Prometheus this is Alpha Six on uplink.”

In the C.I.C. of the Prometheus Maddie received the call from Major Tompkins and listened carefully as he relayed his situation. “Stand by Alpha Six.” She replied turning to Commander Turner. “Sir, I have a priority request from Alpha Six for orbital fire support. He says they’re pinned down by heavy indirect fire.”

“Does he have a fix on the source of the fire?” Turner asked calmly.

“Yes sir.” Maddie replied as she walked over to him and pointed to a location on the map. “Says that the source is from covered positions in that mountain and that his weapons aren’t effective against their fortifications.”

“We’ll have to drop altitude to get into position to fire sir.” Said Captain Green as he approached the situation table.

“That’s also danger close.” Added Major Horvath from beside them.

“Can you hit it without killing anyone in the compound?” Turner asked.

“If you can get someone to hit it with a targeting laser I can land the round down the gun barrel if you want.” Green replied with a smile.

Turner nodded. “Do it then. Maddie, contact Wolf Six and tell him we need a targeting laser on those guns.”

“Aye sir.” Maddie and Green both replied.

“Captain Reighney, bring us into a low orbit for a fire support mission.” Major Horvath commanded.

“Aye sir.” Reighney replied as she took in the information on her screen and made quick mental calculations. “Altitude: Z-Minus five thousand meters. Direction, come left six degrees. Attitude: On my mark, roll right twenty degrees.”

Crewmen sprang into action as Reighney issued her orders and made the ship move. Turner watched satisfied by his crew’s performance and smiled knowing the fight was about to take a bad turn for the enemy on the ground.

## CHAPTER 4

### WRATH OF THE GODS

#### Z + 42 MINUTES

“Roger Prometheus. Give us one minute to set up.” Said Allain Halloran and he acknowledged Turner’s orders. “Wolf Five, break out your targeting laser and get to the highest point you can find and locate where that artillery fire is coming from. You got sixty seconds.”

“On it sir.” Gunnery Sergeant Howell replied in his gruff voice.

“Wolf Three, sitrep.” Halloran commanded.

“I got the X.O. plus two with me. I’m one minute from the evac point.” Three replied.

“Good. Two: sitrep.”

“Lights are out sir. Standing by for target practice.”

“Ok. Go ahead and start head hunting Two. One, find a spot and hole up until Five or I signal you, then call Prometheus and tell them the target is lit.”

“Roger that sir.” Two replied, “What are you going to do?”

Halloran laughed. “Four and I are going to go and pick a fight.”

\*\*\*

Colonel Marco Hall paced the C.I.C. of the Gunstar *Vigilant* while he kept his eyes riveted to the dradis screen. “He’s still on us.” he growled.

“Sir, if he gets much closer he’ll be inside our minimum firing range.” Said Captain Black, the *Vigilants’* X.O.

“I’m tired of this shit anyways. Shut down the stealth field and activate the weapons.” Hall commanded.

“With pleasure.” Black responded with a smile. “Weapons coming online now sir.”

“Enemy vessel has increased speed and is closing sir.” One of the crewmen reported.

“Open missile ports one alpha through ten alpha.” Hall ordered.

Black flipped a switch. “Ports open sir. Thirty seconds until they breach minimum firing range.”

“Target their bridge.” Hall said. “If they want to come straight on we’ll give them a reason to regret it.”

“Enemy vessel is firing sir!”

“Helm: stand by for evasive! X.O. how long until we have firing solution?”

“Five seconds sir.” Black replied as she worked feverishly.

“Ten seconds until impact sir.”

Hall watched as the seconds counted down and the missiles approached on dradis.

“Captain Black...”

“Got it sir!”

“Then by all means FIRE!”

All ten Sparrow Anti-Ship missiles lanced out in a straight line following the targeting laser that the *Vigilant* was painting the destroyer’s bridge with. Both sets of missiles passed each other as they sped on their way to their targets.

“Evasive starboard! All hands, brace for contact!”

Everyone in the *Vigilant*’s C.I.C grabbed hold of something as the enemy missiles raced towards them.

Then they hit.

The ship quaked and heaved beneath them as the missiles impacted along the portside bow of the ship. Alarms blared and sparks flew as systems shorted out and died.

“Hull breach!” someone shouted as a new alarm began to scream.

“Portside, forward of frame six!” Another voice shouted.

The ship continued to shake for a few moments and then finally stopped as an eerie silence came across the C.I.C.

“Damage report!” Hall commanded.

“Hull breaches on decks nine and ten, all forward of frame six.” Black reported. “Decompression in sections twenty one and twenty two as well as- oh frak.”

“What is it?” Colonel Hall demanded.

Captain Black sighed. “They hit the main power distribution node on the port side. Power is fluctuating in all systems forward of frame twenty five.”

Outside in space, a brilliant glow suddenly attracted everyone’s attention.

“What the hell was that?” Hall asked.

“That was the enemy ship sir. Looks like we got em.” Captain Black replied.

“That’s a comfort.” Hall said.

And then the lights flickered and went out.

“That’s *not*.”

\*\*\*

## **Z + 44 MINUTES**

Gunnery Sergeant Howell perched himself atop a roof vent as he held the laser targeting gun atop his shoulder and peered through the targeting reticule at the section of the mountain where the cannon blasts were coming from.

“Target is lit.” he announced as he depressed the stud that activated the targeting laser. “One, send the message.”

Down below, Wolf One was hidden behind a small building that smelled an awful lot like a latrine. He paid it no mind though as the message came from Wolf Five. “Roger Five, message sent.” He said as he sent the coded text message.

High above in the Prometheus C.I.C., Maddie received the coded message and turned to Captain Green. “Target is lit sir.”

Green studied his display and saw the target lit brilliantly in the darkness below. “Got it. Feeding coordinates to Battery Three.”

The weapons officer flipped several more switches and then nodded. “Ready to fire.”

“Do it.” Turner commanded.

“Rounds away!” Green announced.

On the surface, Wolf One received a two word message from Prometheus:  
Incoming. Duck.

“Rounds incoming, Five.” One warned.

Five smiled. This was the part he liked.

Above him he watched as the round came flying in from orbit. He could almost imagine the looks on the faces of the soldiers manning the guns as they realized that their life was about to end in one flaming and painless moment.

Gunnery Sergeant Howell couldn't help but smile as the mountain seemed to flower open with petals of flame as the N.A.C. 10 round impacted into the gun positions. Rocks spewed forth and the side of the mountain where the gun positions had been dug in at seemed to sag and then collapse as the support structures inside were blown away.

“Splash One! Target destroyed!” Howell reported a little too happily.

Inside the turret of his Landram II, Major Tompkins whooped as he saw the guns on the mountain disappear in a ball of fire and rock.

“That's it boys! Take down the gate and let's get our people out of there!”

\*\*\*

## **Z + 48 MINUTES**

Above in space, Slider had been fighting to keep his craft on course for several long minutes when his proximity alarm finally began to howl at him. In front of him, point defense guns were blazing away as he streaked towards his goal.

“That's right you mother frakker! You can scream all you want but this bitch is still going right down your throat!”

The ship began to vibrate more and more as the engines threatened to overload from the strain of going at 110% for so long. Of course, it didn't help that he was taking the occasional flak round too.

Seeing bright lights ahead Slider made his decision. “Ok Prometheus, it's time to go!”

Grasping the ejecting handle below he seat he yanked hard—

Nothing happened.

“Oh frak.” He said as he read his data screen. EJECTION SYSTEM ERROR. USE ALT SYSTEM.

“Great!” he said as he reached behind him to grab the alternate ejection handle.

Looking forward he saw that he was close enough to make out people inside the viewports of the ship he was about to ram. “Time to go!”

Pulling with all his might and hoping that the system still worked, Slider activated the ejection system and found himself rocketed far above the cruiser. As he tumbled over and over he was able to catch a glimpse of his fighter impacting the ship.

He smiled. Then he blacked out.

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# EPILOGUE

## HOME AT LAST

### Z + 74 MINUTES

Colonel Ryan opened his eyes as the bright lights of the landing bay washed over him. Looking up he was able to see Doctor Kaplan and Dr. Zylman both looking down on him.

“Don’t worry sir, you’re going to be fine. You’re back on the Prometheus now.” Kaplan was saying as they loaded him onto a stretcher and began to move him.

“Good to have you back James.” Zylman said as he grasped the Colonel’s hand and gave it a squeeze. “You’re a hero to us all.”

Ryan shook his head weakly. “Not- hero.” He whispered.

“I would disagree.” Said a rich baritone voice from behind him.

Looking up he saw Commander Turner standing there with a big smile on his face. “Everyone I have talked to said you were brave and noble and did everything you could to ensure the well being of this crew. I’d say that makes you a hero.”

Ryan tried to reply but choked up as tears came to his eyes.

Turner wiped them away. “We’ll talk more later. Right now I think you have earned a couple of lazy days.” He said turning to Dr. Kaplan. “Keep me informed.”

\*\*\*

Sheba stepped off of the Raptor to find herself in a familiar environment, one that she thought she would never see again.

“Captain Percival?”

She turned to see the astonished face of Major Horvath standing in front of her. Immediately she snapped to attention and saluted.

Horvath ignored the salute and, in an uncharacteristic move, yanked Sheba into a bear like embrace. “We all thought you were dead.” She said.

“So did I.” Sheba replied. “I don’t even remember hitting the ejection system. I just woke up from a coma several weeks later in that hell hole of a prison.”

Horvath released the younger pilot and wiped away a single tear that had formed in her eye. “Well I am glad to have you back, no matter what. But I think I know someone who will be happier.”

“Slider? Where is he?” Sheba asked, almost too anxiously.

“He’s on the rescue Raptor that just touched down. He got hurt but he should be ok.”

Sheba didn’t even bother to say anything as she broke away at a dead sprint to where the rescue raptor was being hauled in. Leaping onto the wing she pressed the hatch release and jumped inside to find Slider laid out on a stretcher, his legs bleeding and his lips a slight shade of blue.

“What happened?” Sheba demanded.

“He punched out.” The flight medic replied. “He’s got shrapnel wounds in his legs and he’s hypoxic from the suit leak he had. If we would have been another thirty seconds...”

“Jason? Jason wake up!” Sheba said as she touched Slider’s face.

Slider slowly opened his eyes to blinding light and the face of an angel. He smiled. “I knew I would find you here.” He said, his voice just a whisper. “I missed you so much.”

Sheba smiled and tears began to flow down her cheeks. “You’re alive you miserable frak! We’re both alive.”

“A-alive?” Slider asked.

“Yes. We’re home aboard the Prometheus.”

“But, how?”

“Ma’am, we need to get him to the hospital as quick as we can. He’s still in danger.”

Sheba nodded. “Don’t worry about that now. Just get well. We can talk about that when you are better.”

“Don’t leave me.” Slider said as the medics loaded him on a stretcher.

“Don’t worry,” Sheba replied as she grabbed his hand tight, “I’m never leaving you again.”

\*\*\*

Executor Bane looked out over the ruins of the Ironhold colony and fought to keep his anger in check. At his feet lay the form of the dead former commander, Precentor Ladicus.

Killed by his own blade.

Looking into the sky he saw the brief flashed as the three Colonial ships activated their FTL drives and jumped away.

No doubt, heads would roll for this. The newly elected Sae'tzar, Lucius Verenos, would not be happy that one of his key production facilities for Tyllium had been destroyed.

Chances are he would be called before the new Primus, Rollo Thomasi, to explain the debacle.

He already had a plan in place though. The blame would fall squarely on the shoulders of the now dead Precentor. He would be considered justified in his summary execution of the man.

And when they found out that he had hidden a microscopic tracking device in the body of several prisoners, well they would be just that much more pleased with him.

*No he thought to himself, You won't get away that easily my little pet. Whether it be now or later, James Ryan III, your spoiled, sick, corrupt and privileged excuse for an existence will end with my hands bathed in your blood.*