



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

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

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

Commander Nigel Alexander: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Sentinel

Colonel Marco Hall: Commanding Officer, Gunstar Vigilant

Colonel Karla 'Ice Queen' Horvath: Executive Officer, Gunstar Sentinel

Major Tompkins: Commanding Officer, 7th Marine Expeditionary Regiment

Captain David Briedis: Chief Engineer of the Prometheus

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

Captain Jason 'Slider' Allen: C.A.G. Prometheus Air Wing

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

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

Captain Stacie "Sheba" Percival: Commander of the 101st Viper Squadron.

FOE

Sae'tzar Lucius Verenos: Supreme Ruler of the Alliance

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

Primus Rollo Thomasi: Supreme Commander of the Alliance Expansionary
Defense Fleet

PROLOGUE

JUST REWARDS

The main assembly deck of the Battlestar Prometheus was packed wall to wall as Commander Turner took his place at the entry way situated at the back of the hall.

Looking out, Turner could see that most of the crew, with the exception of the mission essential skeleton crew who were manning their posts but would be listening by radio, was present. Enlisted soldiers wore their best green uniforms while the officers had on their Colonial Blues with the ceremonial sash across the chest.

Turner checked his own uniform one last time, and adjusted his sash with the numerous medals and badges he had earned over the years along with the Master Pilots wings he wore proudly. The new rank insignias that he had pinned on recently with his appointment to the rank of Commodore caught the light and made his eyes shine.

It was regulation that whenever two Commanders were assigned to the same group without a flag officer present, the senior one received a lateral appointment to the rank of Commodore.

Technically, it made him a junior flag officer right under the rank of Rear Admiral. Most people in the fleet realized it was a technical distinction in order to establish seniority in the rank structure.

When Turner had gone to Colonel Ryan in sickbay to show him Colonel Alexander's orders promoting him to Commander and also the lateral appointment orders for himself, Ryan chuckled.

"All the responsibilities of an Admiral for the pay of a Commander," The X.O. had quipped. "Fleet got a good bargain with you."

Now, as Turner looked out over the assembled officers, he felt the weight of the new rank on his shoulders as surely as if it was the weight of the world.

Flag Officer: a lot of new responsibilities as well as authority.

Taking a deep breath, Turner looked at the Marine honor guard who was standing to his post, waiting to announce him. "Go ahead son."

The Marine fired off a crisp salute, then executed a right face. "Gentlemen: The Fleet Commander!"

Immediately, Colonel Ryan stepped forward leaning heavily on his cane and doing his best to present a rigid composure. "Group: Atten-SHUN!"

Taking his cue, Turner began the long walk down the aisle between the two twenty man deep columns of soldiers on his left and right. He could feel their eyes on him as he marched formally to the head of the room and then mounted the dais to where his senior officers were standing in one line at the position of attention.

Moving to the podium where Colonel Ryan stood, Turner came face to face with his friend and returned the younger man's salute.

"Sir, the officers and crew are assembled." Ryan reported.

"Very well Colonel. Take your post."

"Aye sir." Ryan replied as he moved as quickly as his cane would allow to the far right of the line, his traditional post as the X.O.

Turning to face the assembled crew, Turner took a moment to take in the faces present and he couldn't help but smile. Two months earlier, he had fought hard to break most of those faces free from an Alliance prison camp. Now they were here with him and it felt like he had his family home.

As he looked down at his prepared speech, Turner made a snap decision.

"I had this great speech planned out for you all," he began, "but now that I am here with you, those words just won't do justice to how I feel. We have our family back together."

"Hell yeah!" Someone from the back shouted.

Turner chuckled and then the applause started. Technically, it was a violation of protocol since you weren't supposed to move at the position of attention but Turner only smiled and joined in.

Soon, the whole room was thundering from both the applause and the whoops and shouts of personnel who were overjoyed.

Turner allowed the celebration to go on for a moment and then he held up his hands for silence.

"During these last several months, you have endured more than any Battlestar crew should rightfully have to. You have stood tall in the face of aggression and betrayal and I couldn't be more proud of you."

Again a round of applause punctuated Turner's words but he brought it to a quick end.

“All of you have done outstanding work under extraordinary circumstances and all of you are going to be rewarded in time but right now I wanted to take a few moments to recognize some individuals whose performance above and beyond the call of duty has set the example of what it means to be a Colonial Soldier. All of the following awards have been submitted through Colonial Command and been approved. The first person is Lieutenant Allain Halloran.”

Halloran stepped forward from his position in line and made his way to the front to face Turner. He then snapped a quick salute which Turner returned and then stood at attention.

“Attention to orders: This is to certify that Lieutenant Allain Halloran has been awarded the Colonial Silver Star Cluster for conspicuous bravery in the line of duty while on detached combat service aboard the Battlestar Prometheus. Lieutenant Halloran showed exemplary courage under fire while attempting to prevent the capture of his wounded commanding officer from enemy personnel. Being wounded in the line of duty, Mr. Halloran continued to fight to ensure the safe evacuation of his commander and was instrumental in the success of that operation. Mr. Halloran’s actions reflect great credit on himself, the Battlestar Prometheus and the Colonial Defense Force.”

Turner took the medal, formed in the shape of thirteen small silver stars in a circle and attached to a red ribbon and pinned it to Halloran’s chest. “Congratulations.” He said as he shook Halloran’s hand.

“Thank you, sir.” Halloran replied as he moved to turn away.

“Not so fast Mister Halloran.”

Halloran turned back with a look of curiosity on his face as Turner produced a black jeweler’s box with a Colonial insignia on it.

“You don’t get off that easily,” Turner said with a smile. “you see, as a Flag Officer on detached combat service, I have a lot of new authorities, one of which is to grant advance promotions to those who have earned it and you, Mister Halloran, have done so.”

Halloran raised his eyebrows in surprise as Turner opened the box to reveal rank insignia inside. “Mister Halloran, in recognition of your heroic action in freeing your fellow crew men from captivity, I hereby grant you the battlefield commission of Captain in the Colonial Defense Force.”

Before the astonished officer could react, Turner reached out and removed his Lieutenants insignia and replaced them with the Captains pins inside the box. Upon completion, Turner again offered the younger man his hand. “Congratulations, *Captain* Halloran.”

Smiling and still shocked, Halloran accepted Turner's handshake and then fired off a crisp salute. "Thank you, sir!"

Turner nodded and gestured for him to return to his place.

"Next, I want to recognize someone who single handedly saw to the welfare of the crew while I was incapacitated. Colonel Ryan, please step forward."

The crew was oddly tense while Ryan limped forward on his cane and Turner understood why. He had been whisked away not long after the ship had been captured and the Alliance had done their best to spread rumors that he had broken and sold them out the first chance he got.

Most of the crew was smart enough to realize that if he had broke, he hadn't done so peacefully. Still, there were those who persisted in pushing the rumors as a way of being able to blame someone for their dire circumstances and people could only hear so much before they began to wonder if it was true.

That was the main reason Turner was bringing his X.O. forward now. The crew needed to know the truth.

"Many of you heard rumors after the capture of the ship. Rumors that this man had sold you out to save himself; rumors that he had worked hand in hand with the enemy at the cost of your freedom and lives. I'm here today to tell you that *nothing* could be further from the truth."

Turner watched the response from the crew as his words began to sink in. Next to him, Ryan was shaking slightly, a side effect from the ordeal he had endured at the hands of the Alliance.

"Colonel Ryan underwent horrendous torture at the hands of your captors." Turner continued. "When I think about what he went through in those weeks following the fall of Prometheus, it makes me sick. But this man endured it. He sucked up the pain and the humiliation and never gave up hope. And why did he do it? Why did he accept torture and give up the information he did?"

Turner looked around the room as the impact of what Ryan had endured began to sink in to the crew. "He did it because they had told him that if they didn't submit to their every whim, if he didn't give them what they wanted, they would begin torturing and killing all of you, one by one, until he did."

The crowd gasped as they realized that this one man had probably saved all of their lives.

“Had he not lived up to the trust and confidence that I had placed in him as my second in command, I can assure you all that he would be cooling his heels in the brig right now. However, he did more than I could ever have asked of him which is why it is my honor to present him with the Gold Star Cluster in recognition of his outstanding service to this ship and her crew.”

Mild applause rang out and grew louder as the emotion of the moment washed over them. Even Turner found himself applauding his X.O.

Ryan stood rigid as Turner pinned the medal to his chest and did his best not to let the tears well up as the crowd applauded him and cheered. Inside he felt the turmoil of his emotions, the fear, the relief, the surprise and even the joy of the moment threatening to overwhelm him but he fought these feelings down and managed to keep his military bearing.

Turner, seeing the emotional reaction of his friend placed a hand on his shoulder and gave it a squeeze. “Well done Colonel.”

Ryan nodded and gave the best salute he could manage before returning to his place in line.

“And now for something that has been a long time coming,” Turner said with a grin as he motioned Colonel Alexander over.

The thin man, impeccably dressed and groomed, as usual, marched forward with parade ground precision and presented himself to Turner.

“Colonel Alexander took charge of the fleet while I was incapacitated and ensured the survival of the *Sentinel* and the *Vigilant*. In fact, I will go so far as to say that were it not for his actions after the capture of the Prometheus, none of you would be here today.”

“After the fall, this man could have ordered us back to Colonial space, leaving the Prometheus and you, her crew, in enemy hands. Fortunately for us all, he knew where his duty lay and he set about devising a plan that would get the ship back as well as her crew. It’s thanks to him that we are all here aboard the Prometheus today.”

Applause rang out as the crew expressed their approval. However, Turner quickly held up a hand to silence it.

“In recognition of your heroic efforts on behalf of the Prometheus crew and your years of dedicated service to the Twelve Colonies of Kobol, you are hereby promoted from Colonel to Commander, effective immediately.”

Alexander smiled as Turner pinned the new rank on his collar and shook his hand. “Congratulations Commander. You have *more* than earned this.”

Alexander smiled sheepishly and nodded. “Thank you sir,” he said in his polished Caprican accent.

As Turner faced back towards his crew he smiled while they applauded and cheered for Alexander. It was then that he realized they weren’t just cheering for Alexander or Ryan or even him:

They were cheering for themselves.

With that thought in mind, he joined in.

CHAPTER 1 THE BEST DEFENSE...

COMMAND CONFERENCE ROOM BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

Commodore Turner sat down at the head of the conference table and unbuttoned the tip of his tunic. Looking around the table he could see that his senior officers had done the same thing after the ceremony.

“Ok, now that the ceremony is over, I suppose you’re wondering why I called you here.”

“I was kind of hoping a bottle of Ambrosia would be involved,” Commander Alexander quipped, eliciting a chuckle from the rest of the group.

Turner found himself smiling as well. “I wish I could say it was, but the truth is a bit more serious,” he replied taking a deep breath. “We face a tough question right now: What do we do next?”

“I would assume that we would carry on with our original mission.” Alexander replied.

“Can’t do that.” Said Colonel Horvath from her position next to Commander Alexander “The Alliance knows what we’re capable of and they have been looking for an excuse to attack the Colonies. We gave them that.”

“The new Colonel speaks!” Quipped Colonel Hall from across the table.

“Don’t go picking on my new X.O., Colonel. I might have to turn her lose on you.” Alexander replied with an easy smile.

Everyone chuckled including Horvath, at the jibe.

“Seriously though, we can’t just leave and not do anything about the mess we’ve started.” Horvath said.

“Well we’ve already warned Colonial Fleet Command of the situation. There’s not much more we *can* do.” Said Colonel Ryan.

“I disagree.” Horvath countered. “We could hit them. *Hard.*”

“What would you have us do Colonel? Go on the offensive against the Alliance? Three ships against their entire fleet? We don’t have the resources for a protracted campaign of that nature.”

“We could call on Lucas Verenos to help us. His organization—”

“Has its own agenda.” Turner said bringing the discussion to a halt. “And to be honest, I am not inclined to trust him after what he pulled during the operation to liberate the ship from Alliance hands.”

“Any port in a storm sir.” Horvath countered.

“Not this time.” Turner shook his head. “But I am inclined to agree with you on one thing-- we can’t leave the situation as is.”

“Sir, we can’t mount a full offensive against the Alliance. It would be suicide.” Ryan warned.

“Which is why we won’t.” Turner replied as he opened a folder to reveals a thick file and several pictures. “I am proposing that we conduct a surgical pre-emptive strike on their key Tyllium production facility.”

The officers leaned in and began to study the pictures as Turner opened the file and began to speak. “This is Carrollon. The planet is unique because of the high Tyllium content in its crust. It’s so rich in Tyllium that they have careful regulations for mining it. One wrong move could turn the entire planet into a fireball.”

“Sir, you can’t be proposing to do that.” Colonel Ryan said cautiously. “No matter how desperate we might be, we cannot be considering destruction on a scale that massive.”

“Why not? They’d do the same thing to us if given the chance.” Horvath replied.

“I agree with her.” Said Colonel Hall, breaking his silence. “These guys are ruthless and show no mercy when they fight. If we’re going to stand up to them we have to do the same.”

“And sacrifice everything moral that we hold dear?” Ryan counted. “What good is defending our society if we’re willing to abandon the principles it espouses?”

This last statement brought the conversation to a standstill for a long moment until the Commodore broke the silence.

“Colonel Ryan is right. We won’t lower ourselves to the standards of our enemies. That’s why we aren’t attacking the planet itself. We’re going to take out the four refinery platforms that are orbiting it.”

Everyone nodded their approval of the target.

“That’ll get their attention.” Alexander said.

“It should grind them to a halt.” Turner replied. “These refineries are the majority of their refining capacity. The only other two are in orbit of Terra herself.”

“If we take them out, we cripple their Tyllium production.” Horvath said.

“And with such a massive military force to keep supplied, they’ll be forced to cut back operations.” Colonel Hall agreed.

“Might even make them stop and rethink their attitude towards us.” Turner said. “So it’s settled. Notify your people: Operational planning begins in twelve hours.”

**IMPERIAL OFFICE
GRAND PANTHEON OF THE ALLIANCE
ROMALIN, TERRA**

Tyranus Bane executed a deep bow as he entered the presence of Lucius Verenos, the new Sae’tzar of the Terran Alliance.

Looking up from his desk, Verenos motioned him forward and set aside his paperwork. “Who knew that ruling the Alliance would encompass so much of the mundane,” he said with a deep sigh.

Bane remained silent, as he had been taught to do when speaking with superiors. Yet he could tell that Verenos was sizing him up, like a predator sizing up his prey.

“I assume you know why you’re here.”

Bane remained silent.

Verenos nodded approvingly. “I see that all your years among the barbarians hasn’t dulled your sense of protocol. That’s good. Report, Executor.”

“My lord, the Ironhold facility isn’t a total loss but it will take at least a year to get it back to full capacity.” Bane began.

Verenos made an impatient gesture. “I am *aware* of that, Executor. Explain to me why you executed Precentor Ladicus.”

“I killed him because he failed. Despite all of his vaunted security plans, all of the resources that were poured into upgrading the security of that facility, at his request might I add, he was undone by a small team of well trained saboteurs who inflicted a small amount of pain on him which caused him to divulge the codes that rendered all of those security systems inactive.”

Verenos leaned back and steepled his fingers as he listened to Bane explain his actions. When Bane finished he leaned forward, his eyes intense. “His brother died fighting the Prometheus. The honor garnered by that fact was the only thing that allowed him to survive when I discovered he was working with the Free Worlds League. His exile to Mars was supposed to be a wake up call for him.”

Bane remained silent with his hands respectfully behind his back.

“I will accept your actions as justified.” Verenos said after a moment of thought. “However, I expect you to be-- *generous* in your after action review. His family has served the Alliance well for many generations. I don’t want their name sullied.”

“I will do so, Sae’tzar.” Bane replied. “May I ask what my next assignment will be?”

“Your next assignment is here. I am making you my personal liaison.”

“I am--honored, Sae’tzar. However, I had hoped to be assigned to the team tracking down the Prometheus.” Bane cautiously replied.

“Yes, I know.” Verenos said casually. “However there are larger concerns for you to focus your attention on.”

“If I may be so bold--what could possibly be a larger concern than what is possibly the most powerful warship ever created wandering around our space unchecked?”

“The invasion of the Twelve Colonies.” Verenos smiled. “I want *you* to help me plan it.”

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Slider came to attention and saluted as Commodore Turner entered the C.I.C. of the Prometheus. He was tired after standing watch for eight hours, but it was now part of his duties as the new C.A.G..

“Good Morning Major.” Turner greeted him as he returned the salute.

Slider nodded his head, still not used to his new rank. “Good morning sir. No contacts on dradis or scope, all sections report Green Status except engineering which is still at Amber. Hospital reports twenty two personnel for sick call this morning, all of it mostly routine except for Corporal Macias, who broke his ankle during a sparring match this morning.”

The Commodore nodded. “Any word from Major Briedis about Engine One?”

“Yes sir, he’s E.V.A. checking the seal job right now.”

“Who’s out there with him?”

“Ensign Margaritell is on the deck with him and Archangel is in Raptor one four two covering them.”

“Good. Anything else?”

“Yes sir. I just got done looking over our final numbers for the pilot roster.”

“And?”

Slider frowned. “It’s not good sir. We lost seven pilots during the fight over Mars and twelve in the fight where the ship was captured. Add to that the three Raptor jockeys we lost while in captivity and we are down a lot of pilots.”

Turner examined the paper himself and shook his head. “Twenty-one pilots dead and thirty-one wounded or injured in the last four months.”

“At least the injured are back on their feet and flying again.”

“True. Of course, we’ve lost a lot more than just pilots.”

“I know sir. Seventy one Marines killed during the assault on the ship, fourteen more dying of wounds while in captivity. One hundred and six crewmen...”

Turner held up a hand and Slider stopped. He knew it was a painful subject for the entire crew but Turner felt it especially deep inside. The look on the Commodore's face was enough to make him wish he had stayed quiet.

"What do you want to do?" Turner asked after a long moment.

"With your permission sir, I would like to begin calling up our reserves amongst the crew, the ones you and Colonel Horvath identified as potential candidates for replacement pilots before we got underway."

"Go ahead," Turner said, "But make sure you run the names past the X.O. to make sure they aren't in mission critical areas now."

"Understood sir." Slider replied.

"Good, now go get some sleep." Turner commanded. "You've been up for over twenty four hours and I need you frosty for the operational planning meeting tomorrow."

"Yes sir." Slider nodded wearily. "One question before I go though?"

"Shoot."

"Have you made a decision about Sheba yet?"

Turner nodded. "Yes. As soon as Doc Kaplan clears her, she is restored to flight status. Use her as you see fit."

Slider smiled. "Thanks sir. I know she will appreciate it."

"She's a hell of a pilot and she has done great things for us. We're just lucky to have her back."

CHAPTER 2

REPLACEMENTS

ENLISTED GALLEY # 4 BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

Sheba ducked to avoid a platter of food as it rushed by her as she stepped into the kitchen of Enlisted Galley number four. Looking around she saw that the kitchen staff was bustling with activity in preparation for the midday meal.

“Someone check those rolls in the oven!” A voice shouted over the din of activity.

“I got it Chief.” A female replied rushing over to the massive baking oven located near one of the bulkheads.

“Where’s Chief Fields?” Sheba asked as another crewman brushed past her carrying a bowl of yellow batter.

“I’m Chief Fields, who’s asking?” said a short and stocky man wearing a cook’s white uniform and apron, both of which were stained with various kinds of food substances.

“I am.” Sheba replied stepping up to the man. “Captain Percival.”

“Howdy ma’am.” The Chief replied tossing her a lazy salute. “What can we do for you?”

“I’m here for one of your knuckle draggers, Crewman First Class Melody Moody.” Sheba said as she read off her name from a roster in her hands.

“She in some kind of trouble?” the Chief asked.

“Not yet.” Sheba replied dryly.

“Moody! Get yer ass over here!” The Chief shouted.

“Moving Chief!” an eager female voice replied.

As the crewman approached, Sheba looked her over and raised her eyebrows in surprise. “*You’re* Crewman Moody?”

“Yes ma’am!” Moody replied snapping to attention. “Crewman First Class Melody Moody, Baker’s Mate.”

Sheba nodded looking her over again. “When’s the last time you stepped on a scale crewman?”

“This morning, sir. I’ve now lost ten pounds since last month.” Moody replied.

Sheba shook her head. “Says here that you scored a one seventy on your Flight Aptitude Test. That true?”

“Yes sir!” Moody replied proudly. “I studied months for that test.”

“So why didn’t you make it into flight school then, Crewman?”

Moody’s face dropped a bit. “I was overweight sir.”

“Looks like you’re over weight now too.” Sheba replied.

“Yes sir but I *am* working on it.” Moody replied.

Sheba nodded and weighed the options in her head. The woman in front of her had scored higher than anyone else on the ship by twenty points on the F.A.T. yet she was clearly overweight.

If they had been back in the Colonies this girl wouldn’t have even been considered. One thing the Colonial Defense Force was strict on was physical fitness.

Out here though, over three hundred jumps from home and with no hope of reinforcements coming, Sheba would have to deal with what she had available.

“How far are you over regulation weight, Crewman?”

“I’m over by six pounds six.” Moody replied.

“You have three days to lose it.”

“Sir?” Moody replied, confused.

“We’re down pilots right now Crewman and you’ve got the chance to be one. Do you want it or don’t you?”

Moody’s mouth dropped as surprise lit up her face. “You mea--me? Oh my gods! Yes I want it! More than anything else in the world!”

“Then report to hangar seven in the starboard flight pod at zero five hundred in three days.”

“Yes sir! Thank you so much!”

“Don’t thank me yet. If you show up just one ounce over regulation weight, you’re out. Got it?”

“Yes sir!” Moody replied excitedly.

“Good. Dismissed.”

Sheba watched as Moody seemed to float away on a cloud of her own happiness.

“I think you just made her the happiest girl on the ship, Captain.” Chief Fields said as he watched Moody go.

“She’s got three days to enjoy it.’ Sheba replied. “Because if she gets in, her life is going to be hell until she graduates or washes out. I’ll make *sure* of it.”

**WARD THREE, HOSPITAL SECTION
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

James Ryan buttoned his uniform as Doctor April Kaplan finished writing her notes on a datapad. He had been sitting on the examination table for the last hour and he was more than ready to leave.

He tried not to show it, but his heart was pounding and his skin crawling just being in the ship’s hospital.

It reminded him too much of the interrogation sessions he had endured with Tyranus Bane on board the ship and later, when he had been hauled off to Mars.

“Well your injuries have healed for the most part. Your knee cartilage is going to take a week or so more to finish but all in all you’re doing well physically.” Kaplan announced after setting down her pad.

“That’s good Doc, thanks.” Ryan said as he stood to leave.

“Not so fast Colonel.” Kaplan said holding up her hand. “You *are* showing signs of fatigue. Your blood pressure is up and your heart rate is high.”

“We *have* been kind of busy around here lately.” Ryan countered with a smile.

Kaplan chuckled and shook her head. “Let’s try to cut through the *feldergarb*, shall we Colonel?”

“You speak Gemineese.” Ryan said, surprised. “You never told me—”

“Don’t change the subject sir.” Kaplan cut him off gently. “How have you been sleeping?”

Ryan made ready to try and talk himself out of the question but the firm look on Kaplan’s face told him he would never leave until she got a straight answer from him.

“Not well.” He sighed.

“Why?”

Ryan looked away from her and was quiet for a long moment before he answered. “Nightmares.”

“About?” Kaplan pressed.

The Colonel spun back around with a sarcastic expression on his face. “What do you think?”

Kaplan nodded. “You’re not the only one, you know. We’ve had a lot of Post Traumatic Stress cases since we rescued the crew.”

“I know. I see the counselor’s reports every day.” Ryan replied a bit too harshly.

If Kaplan was offended by his tone, she didn’t show it and Ryan was grateful. Since his return he had been short tempered with a lot of people. Turner himself had mentioned it to him once and he had done his best to keep his emotions under control. It wasn’t easy though.

“Have you considered talking to one of the counselors?” Kaplan asked. “We have three on board for a reason.”

“No.” Ryan answered.

“Why not?”

“Why? I’m the X.O. of the ship! What will the crew think if they see me running to the counselor like some whiney ass kid?”

“What do YOU think they will think?”

“They’ll think that the X.O. has lost his edge! They’ll go into combat with no confidence in me and they’ll start thinking that maybe the old man isn’t so keen either because he has a crazy as his second in command.”

“I think you’re wrong.” Kaplan replied.

“First rule of leadership: Never let your soldiers see you in doubt or weakness.” Ryan recited.

“I thought the first rule of leadership was to lead by example.” Kaplan retorted.

Ryan began to argue but the words froze on his lips and he found he couldn’t speak.

Kaplan watched as the struggle within the Colonel began to unfold and a single tear ran from his eye. Standing, she made her way to him slowly as the walls of resistance crumbled. Placing a hand on his shoulder she smiled and gave it a firm squeeze.

“Come to my quarters tonight at twenty-one hundred hours. No counselors, no official records. Just you and I.”

“Why?” Ryan asked as he stood straight and wiped the tear from his face.

“Just to talk, Friend to friend.”

Ryan nodded. “Okay.”

Kaplan smiled. “See you then.”

Ryan turned to walk out but stopped and looked back at the doctor. “Thank you for your, discretion.”

“All part of the service agreement, Colonel. Have a good day.”

Ryan turned and walked away feeling slightly more at ease but not yet himself. *Hopefully.* He thought.

**STRATEGIC COMMAND CENTER
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Commodore Turner had never liked the S.C.C. because it was too far from where the action took place in the C.I.C.. It was a room that had been built when the Prometheus had been intended as the flagship of the Colonial Fleet. It was a place where flag officers could keep track of larger theaters of combat away from the distractions that were inherent in running a ship.

But it was also the best place to plan strategic operations like the one he was planning now.

Around the circular map table stood the same officers that had met with him after the awards ceremony two days before plus Slider and Major Briedis. On the table were models of the *Prometheus* and her Gunstar escorts as well as that of the refinery stations they would be attacking and a large map image of the world of Carrollon.

“Ok people, this is what were looking at.” Turner said as he gestured to the table. “These four refining stations are defended by a series of missile satellites in orbit around the planet. They’re long range missiles designed to swarm attack an enemy as they approach. These will be our first challenge.”

“Sir, based on the intell we have on these satellites, I believe that we can use the *Vigilant* to attack and destroy them from a distance without risk to the ship.” Said Colonel Hall, the C.O. of the *Vigilant*.

Turner nodded. “That was my thought as well. Only problem with it is that it leaves you alone at a distance while the real fight is going on. If someone attacks you while we’re engaged you could be in a lot of trouble.”

“I can assign some fighters to stay with them and help if they run into trouble.” Slider said.

“That works.” Turner agreed as he placed a model of the *Prometheus* into place on the board along side a model of the *Sentinel*. “We’ll jump in as one *here*,” Turner pointed to the table, “but the *Prometheus* and the *Sentinel* will move forward as the *Vigilant* begins to engage the satellite defenses.”

“Sir, this is a high value target,” Colonel Horvath interjected, “seems only logical that the Alliance would have some heavy hitters guarding it.”

“You’re right, Colonel, they *do* have some heavy hitters.” Turner replied placing several models on the table. “They don’t like devoting ships of the line to protect static facilities because they feel it is beneath their front line status. That’s why they have four *Venator* class destroyers here.”

“We don’t have much intell on them.” Ryan said. “We know that they have anti-fighter defenses and that they don’t carry any fighters themselves but that’s about it.”

“We also don’t know what ship to ship defenses they have.” Turner interjected. “Either way, they could potentially be very deadly so we have two choices: Slug it out with them and deal with the refineries once they have been eliminated or hold them off while we deal with the refineries.”

“I think time is of the essence here.” Commander Alexander spoke up. “The longer we are in the combat zone, the more chance we have of reinforcements showing up.”

“I agree sir.” Slider added. “I think we should go in fast, hit them hard and get out before they know what hit them.”

“I think that’s the best plan sir.” Ryan said. “We go in and use the *Prometheus* and the *Sentinel* to cover while our fighters close with and destroy the refineries.”

Turner nodded his agreement. “Okay, so how do you want to divvy up the targets, CAG?”

Slider leaned over the table and examined the situation closely before responding. “I’ll lead the 101st against the farthest target—”

“No.” Turner interjected.

“Sir?” Slider asked.

“You’re the C.A.G. now, Slider. I want you here to coordinate the fight.”

“But sir--”

Next to him Horvath chuckled. “Welcome to my world, sport.”

“Sir, I think I should be out there leading from the front.” Slider said, ignoring the chuckles of the other senior officers.

“Not this time.” Turner said. “This is a large operation and I want you here to coordinate it since the X.O. and I are going to be too busy to help. Put your best person on it.”

Slider nodded. “Okay, Sheba. She can take the 101st in and deal with that one.”

“That squadron is way under strength, Major.” Ryan noted.

“I know sir. That’s why I want her to go after the farthest target. I intend to use the other three squadrons to attack and tie up any fighters they might have based on the ground or on the refineries.” Slider replied.

“I’m satisfied with that.” Turner said. “So we take the Barge and the Sentinel and form a perimeter to engage the destroyers while the fighters go in and take out the refineries. I also want Scimitar bombers on stand by incase you need some heavy ordnance.”

“Yes sir. I’ll coordinate with Archangel.” Slider replied.

“Okay, so we all know our parts. Let’s not kid ourselves here-- We’re going in blinder than usual. Keep your heads in the game for this and be ready for surprises.”

“Yes sir.” The group responded as one.

“The mission kicks off in twenty-four hours, so get cracking.”

CHAPTER 3

SPINNING WHEELS

CAFÉ OLYMPIA CAPRICA CITY CAPRICA

Aaron Doral sat with his back to the bar and watched the night scene outside. It was typical for a late evening in the middle of the week. The bar was empty except for him and one other patron who sat in a booth with his head down on the table.

Doral admired the architecture of the place. It was elaborately decorated to resemble the cafés of old, with alabaster calcite lining the walls and paintings of the gods in their various and mighty poses.

Doral couldn’t help but laugh as he noticed that the goddesses were all scantily clad and had the body of a modern holo-movie star rather than the actual way that they had looked in the history texts.

Of course, the mighty gods looked like the epitome of strength and virility as they stood in their various combat poses with their armor gleaming and swords drawn; all of them under the watchful eye of the all knowing Zeus whose head was surrounded by light, hands sparkling with lightning.

“Enjoying the scenery?” asked a female voice from behind him.

Doral turned slowly to find a blonde bombshell in a red dress standing in front of him.

He smiled. “Actually, I was.”

She smiled and gestured to the bartender. “Ambrosia dark with a cola mixer.”

The bartender, not used to seeing such beautiful women in his establishment during the midweek, smiled and hurried to make her drink. When he was done he delivered it to her with a lemon slice.

The blonde took it and placed the money in his hand, making sure that she dragged her fingers along his palm in her typically seductive manner. “Thank you.” she said in a sultry voice.

Doral chuckled as the bartender walked away. “You *do* have a gift.”

The blonde smiled. “I try.”

“So what’s new?” Doral asked.

“He’s taking me to the defense ministry tomorrow.”

Doral nodded. “Good, right on schedule. What about the Command Navigation Program?”

“He was able to complete it ahead of schedule with the timely help of a *friend*.” The blonde replied with a note of pride in her voice.

“Good. Everything is proceeding according to plan then. The others will be happy.”

“Yes, I’m sure they will.”

Doral arched an eyebrow. “Is there something I should know about?”

“You know I’ve never been totally comfortable with this idea.”

“Perhaps your emotions are clouding your judgment. Perhaps you’ve gotten too close to your subject?”

“No,” the blonde replied a little too quickly. “He’s a useful tool, nothing more.”

“How often are you seeing him?”

“Two to three times a week.”

Doral rubbed his eyes. “Perhaps you should back off.”

“I can’t at this point. It’s taken me this long to gain his confidence. If I back off now I won’t get another chance.”

Doral stood and made to leave. “Fine, but don’t lose your focus. This mission is more important than he is. More important than any of us.”

The blonde watched as Doral walked away and out the door. He would never understand what she felt for Gaius Baltar. He would never know what it was like to truly love someone.

All he would ever know was the cold logic of duty.

**SENIOR OFFICER BILLETS
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Colonel Ryan straightened his uniform top as he knocked lightly on the door of Dr. Kaplan’s quarters. After a moment, the door slid aside with the typical hiss as the pneumatic servos did their work.

“Come in,” said the doctor from inside the door.

Walking in cautiously, Ryan found Kaplan sitting at a table, her uniform tunic removed to reveal her black and gray undershirt, with several candles providing the low light in the room.

“Have a seat Colonel.” She said gesturing to the empty chair opposite her

Ryan hesitated for a moment and then made his way over to the table where he took a seat.

“Tea?” She offered from a bottle.

Ryan nodded and she poured it into a waiting cup.

Picking it up, he took a sip of the warm and bittersweet liquid. “Sagitaron Red Tea. Haven’t tasted it in a long while.”

Kaplan smiled. “I have a weakness for it.”

Ryan nodded. “So—”

“So tell me about what happened after the ship was captured.”

Ryan took a deep breath and was about to speak when it felt like his voice locked up. Swallowing he hard he tried to speak again but found that he couldn’t.

“Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea.” He said after a moment.

“Why?” Kaplan asked gently.

“Because—because I don’t know—”

“Why don’t we start out with how you’re feeling now?”

Ryan swallowed and nodded. “Okay.”

Both Ryan and the doctor were silent for a long moment. The doctor watched Ryan intently as he hung his head down and gazed into his cup of tea as if it had some greater cosmic meaning.

When he finally spoke, his voice was quiet and shaky. “I’m afraid.”

Kaplan nodded. “Of what?”

“Of—everything.”

“Because of what happened?”

Ryan’s hands began shaking now, so much so that he was having trouble keeping control of his tea cup. Quickly, he set it on the table only to be surprised when Kaplan took his hands in hers.

He looked into her eyes a long moment as a tear began to run down his cheek. “I was never safe.” He finally said. “He—he used to come for me at all hours. He’d wait until I had just fallen asleep, just felt secure enough to close my eyes, and then he would send in his men.”

Kaplan held his hands tighter as they began to shake more violently.

“He did things to me—things that no one should have to endure. Cruel, inhuman things...”

“It wasn’t your fault you know.” Kaplan said gently.

Ryan’s head snapped up. “Of course it was! I let him take the ship! I let him capture us!” Tears ran freely down his cheeks as a sick feeling twisted his gut into knots. “I should have beaten him!”

“Colonel—James, you were out numbered five to one. There was no way you could have beaten those odds.”

“Then I should have blown up the damned ship!”

“You would have killed everyone if you did that.”

“But at least I would have spared them that hell on Mars.”

Ryan dropped his head to the table and took a deep breath to steady his nerves. “Those people who died were tortured to death. Their last moments were pure agony and I put them in that place.” He was silent again for a moment before he whispered “I *deserved* what I got from Bane. I *deserved* it.”

**82nd VIPER SQUADRON READY ROOM
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

The pilot’s ready room was a jumble of voices as Slider entered from the rear and made his way to the front podium.

“Attention on deck!” commanded Shooter.

Immediately the voices went silent as the 60 members of the 82nd Viper Squadron, known aboard ship as the Knights, snapped to attention.

“Sit down.” Slider said as he turned off the lights and activated the view screen behind him “Okay Knights, today is Game Day. Behind me is your target, officially designated Regula One. Your mission is to close with it as fast as you can and inflict as much damage as possible to these target areas.”

Activating a laser pointer, Slider indicated several points on the image of the refinery. “Shooter will have your individual assignments but the goal is to render this thing inoperable.”

“We’ll blow it out of the sky sir!” A voice from the back called out. “Damn right!” Another chimed in.

“Okay, okay, cut the crap people!” Shooter called out from beside Slider. “This is a high value target so get your frakkin heads in the game.”

Slider waited for a moment as Shooter’s words sunk in before he continued. “I’ll tell you just like I already told the other three squadrons: This is a high value installation for the enemy and we are expecting heavy resistance. I don’t have to tell you that we’ve already lost a lot of good people. We don’t need to lose anymore.”

Slider looked around the room as the lights came up and saw that the faces had changed from jovial to deadly serious. He decided it was time to motivate them.

“On your feet!” he shouted.

Immediately the squadron snapped to attention.

“What do we do people?” he asked.

The room was silent for a moment before someone said “We kill the enemy and break his shit, sir!”

Slider shook his head in mock sadness. “You don’t sound like your motivated soldiers so I’ll ask again. What do we do here?”

“We kill the enemy and break his shit!”

Slider held his hand up to his ear. “What?”

“We kill the enemy and break his shit!”

Slider smiled now. “One more time, I didn’t get that last part.”

The voices were deafening now. “WE KILL THE ENEMY AND BREAK HIS SHIT!”

Slider nodded, satisfied. “Damn right we do,” He said picking up his folder. “Game time is in one hour people so let’s get the old girl ready to roll and kick some Alliance ass!”

“HOOOAH!”

Slider patted Shooter on the shoulder as he made his way out. “Good hunting, Captain.”

**101ST VIPER SQUADRON PILOTS LOCKER ROOM
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

“Action stations! Action stations! Set condition one throughout the ship and make ready for combat jump. This is not a drill. I say again: Action stations! Action stations! Set condition one throughout the ship and make ready for combat jump. All section leaders report green status when ready.”

Sheba listened as Maddie made the announcement in preparation for the jump while she zipped up her new flight jacket and grabbed her collar and helmet from her locker.

Taking a look in the mirror she smiled. She hadn't thought she would ever fly again. Hell, she hadn't thought she would live to have the opportunity. First she rode a nuke in on a capital ship then she awoke in a prison cell deep in the heart of enemy territory.

Now she was back on the ship she called home and getting ready to do what she loved best. Still, the prospect frightened her somewhat.

This would be the first time she had flown in combat since the ship had fallen over four months prior.

Sure, she had flown training missions, but this was different this was—

Suddenly she jerked upright as an image flashed through her head. She was lying in a pool of warm—goo. And as she lay there a face came into view, her own face and her own body.

“Welcome home sister. You're safe now.”

The daydream ended as fast as it had begun and she found herself leaning against the bulkhead breathing heavily, her brow soaked with sweat.

“Sheba? You ok?”

Sheba spun around to find Slider standing in the hatchway looking at her.

“Yeah,” she said quickly as she wiped her brow. “Just a bad memory from the prison is all.”

“Okay.” Slider replied as he walked forward and enfolded her in an embrace.

“Be careful out there, okay?” He said looking into her eyes. “I just got you back. I don't want to lose you again.”

Sheba smiled and kissed him gently. “Never.”

Slider returned the smile and patted her on the butt. “You better get moving, captain. Your new squadron is waiting for you.”

Sheba chuckled and picked up her helmet as she moved past him.

“Good hunting, Captain.” Slider said.

Sheba paused in the doorway and smiled. “Same to you... *sir.*”

CHAPTER 4

GAME ON

Space combat was a silent, violent and beautiful thing normally and this time was no exception. Slider watched through one of the *Prometheus*' many scopes as all of his Vipers and Raptors launched and flew towards their targets like swarms of deadly insects while the *Prometheus* and the *Sentinel* pounded their destroyer targets with their big guns.

"Knight Squadron at release point sir." Maddie reported over the din of radio traffic from her communications station.

"Very well, tell him he is *go* for target." Slider said.

"Helm, come right to one three zero and give me five degrees positive pitch on the bow planes." Colonel Ryan said from beside him.

"Come right to one three zero, five degree up on the bow planes, aye sir." Said Captain Reighney from her position at the helm.

"Contact *Sentinel* and have him flank that lead destroyer." Commodore Turner commanded from the other end of the situation table.

"Aye sir." Said Captain Halloran from the Operations station. "*Sentinel* Actual acknowledges, sir. Executing now."

"Wildcat and Wraith squadrons at release point now sir." Maddie announced.

Slider nodded. "Give them the go," he said turning to the Commodore. "We've engaged Regula one through three sir."

"How far is Sheba from Regula four?" Turner asked.

"Two minutes."

Suddenly the deck beneath them pitched and heaved throwing the unsuspecting officers to the floor and causing the lights to flicker and damage alarms to blare.

"What the frak was that?" Ryan asked as he hauled himself up.

"Direct hit on the starboard bow sir." Major Briedis called from his station at engineering. "Hull breaches on decks nine and ten between frames eighteen and twenty. Emergency doors are sealed and holding."

“Damn.” Turner hissed. “That takes out the forward anti-ship missiles. Casualties?”

“We had seventeen people working in those sections, sir and they didn’t get any warning.” Halloran reported bitterly.

Slider felt bile come up in his throat as he realized that the ship had just lost another group of good men and women. “Where did the missile come from?”

“I got a partial track on it, sir.” Captain Green reported from the Fire Control Center. “Looks like it came from a weapons platform at one-two-zero karem oh-four-five. Range is seven thousand clicks.”

“*That* wasn’t on the intell report.” Ryan commented.

“Incoming fire! Brace for contact!” Green suddenly announced.

Immediately the three men grabbed onto the situation table as another blast rocked the ship. Sparks flew and consoles overloaded as the missile hit home.

“Direct hit to the forward computer processing center.” Briedis announced.

“How the hell are they getting in that close without our anti-missile systems catching them?” Turner asked.

“They’re using skippers.” Slider said as realization dawned on his face.

“What?” Ryan asked.

“Skippers!” Slider explained. “Lucas Verenos told me about them. They’re missile that fire an initial burst then shut down until they’re close to their target. Then they reactivate and slam home so fast that anti-missile systems can’t react.”

“Why isn’t dradis picking them up?” Turner asked.

“Because they’re so small, the only way dradis can pick them up is if they are under power.” Halloran said.

“And by the time they activate their engines, they’re too close to do anything.” Slider said as he turned to Maddie. “Put me through to Archangel.”

A moment of static was the reply Slider got before Archangel’s voice came through. “CAG—Archangel.”

“Archangel—CAG: We have a weapons platform that’s giving us hell up here, coordinates to follow.” Slider replied while gesturing to Halloran to send the target coordinates. “Take your Scimitars, close with and destroy.”

“You got it boss.” Archangel replied cheerfully. “Can we have some fighter support?”

“Who’s closest to him?” Turner asked.

Slider studied the tactical display for a moment then replied “Shooter is. I’ll have him detail two flights to cover them.”

“Go for target, Archangel.” Ryan ordered into his headset. “CAG has support en route, time now.”

“Understood, Archangel out.”

“Commodore! Shooter reports that Regula one has suffered heavy damage and is beginning to de-orbit.”

Turner raised his eyebrows. “Your guys are thorough.”

Slider smiled. “Didn’t want to let the new Commodore down sir.”

Turner nodded. “Mister Halloran, give me a tactical update.”

Halloran stood and moved to the situation table where a large image of the situation appeared. “This is our position here, sir,” He said pointing to *Prometheus*. “This is the *Sentinel* and these are the four destroyers.”

“Venator one has sustained heavy damage to her forward section and is trying to break off. Venator two is relatively undamaged because she’s been hanging back from the fight. I suspect that this is their command ship. The *Sentinel* is slugging it out with Venator three and causing heavy damage right now and Venator four is in a lateral clockwise spin and listing heavily to port. For all intents and purposes, she’s out of the fight.”

Turner nodded. “Good work. Let’s take their command ship out of the fight now.” He said turning to face the Fire Control Officer. “Mister Green, disengage with Venator one and concentrate your fire on Venator two.”

“Yes sir.”

“Any enemy fighter activity?” Colonel Ryan asked.

“No sir. The only birds in the air are ours.” Slider replied.

“Sir, Sheba reports that she has engaged Regula four.” Maddie announced.

“Good,” Turner nodded. “Now let’s finish this fight and get the hell out of here.”

**PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE
QUORUM TOWER, CAPRICA CITY
CAPRICA**

“This is—incredible.” Said President Adar as he read the report presented to him by Fleet Admiral David Anthony. “Not only have they discovered human life, but alien as well.”

“Yes sir.” Anthony replied.

“Not exactly friendly though.”

“I would classify them as a hostile power, sir.”

Adar nodded. “I am inclined to agree. Makes me thankful that Turner was able to get his ship back. No telling what people like that would do with a ship like Prometheus.”

“Yes sir. Turner’s a good man. He wouldn’t let his ship go without a fight.”

“Good, then his appointment to Commodore wasn’t a mistake.” Adar said picking up a cup of tea. “But that isn’t why you’re here is it? I mean the report is a good thing but you’re here to discuss your retirement. Am I wrong?”

Anthony smiled. “Not at all sir.”

Adar smiled in return and gestured for Anthony to have a seat. “So I take it you have someone in mind to replace you?”

“Yes sir.” Anthony replied as he sat opposite Adar. “He’s my Chief of Strategic Operations, Admiral Robert Torres.”

“I’ve heard of him. Fought in the Cylon War didn’t he?”

“Yes sir, he was an Ensign aboard the *first* Prometheus at the time.”

“Anything in his record that will come back to haunt me if I nominate him?”

“Nothing that you can’t overcome with you magnificent oratory skills sir.” Anthony said with a smirk.

Adar chuckled. “I would say that you were bucking for promotion *if* you weren’t already the highest ranking officer in the C.D.F.”

Anthony smiled and shook his head. “No way. I’m looking forward to spending the rest of my years waking up every morning in my nice cabin by the lake. *My* days of adventuring are done.”

**OFFICE OF THE PRIMUS
GRAND PANTHEON, ROMALIN
TERRAN ALLIANCE**

“All four refineries—destroyed.” Rollo Thomasi tried to keep his anger in check as Tyranus Bane reported to him. It was an effort that he was losing.

“Explain to me, Executor, how it is that we allowed the Prometheus anywhere near one of the most valuable resources in the Alliance.” The Primus growled.

Bane guarded his words carefully. He knew that Thomasi was a man who was slow to anger but he also knew that when he *was* angry, it could be murderous.

“I was distracted due to the planning of *Operation: Atlantis*, Primus. The operatives I assigned to track Prometheus—”

“Were hardly adequate for the task it seems.” Thomasi snapped, cutting Bane off. “I want them executed for gross incompetence immediately.”

“As you wish.” Bane replied executing a short bow and moving to leave.

“I haven’t dismissed you yet.” Thomasi said, freezing Bane in his tracks. “*Operation: Atlantis* will have to be indefinitely postponed now due to this—debacle. In the meantime, however, I have an assignment for you.”

“With all due respect Primus, my orders come directly from Sae’tzar now.” Bane replied cautiously.

Thomasi smiled. It was a cold and frightening thing to see. “This mission has the blessing of Sae’tzar himself.”

Bane swallowed. He knew he wasn’t going to like what he was about to hear.

“We cannot risk Turner making contact with Earth or returning to the Colonies with the information he has. I want you to find Prometheus— and *destroy* her.”

EPILOGUE

MOVING ON

HANGAR 7, STARBOARD FLIGHT POD BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

Melody Moody stood at rigid attention as she observed Captain Percival walking down the ranks and inspecting everyone with a watchful eye.

“Nervous?” Whispered a small voice from beside her.

Casting her eyes to the left she saw a skinny crewman with dark hair wearing the orange coveralls of a flight deck mechanic. “Yes,” Moody replied quickly.

Suddenly, Percival was only a few inches from her and it seemed the fires of Hades itself burned in her eyes. “You have something to say candidate?” She snarled.

“No! No sir!” Moody replied nervously.

“What about you candidate? You have something to say?” Percival barked at the dark haired girl.

“No sir!” the girl replied.

“What’s your name candidate?” Percival asked.

“Crewman Ashley Klave sir!” the dark haired girl replied.

“Moody! Did you make weight?” Percival swung to face her.

“Yes sir!” Melody replied. “By two pounds!”

“Is that so?” Percival asked with a smirk. “Are you afraid, Candidate Moody?”

“Sir?” Melody asked.

“Are you afraid!?” Percival barked. *“Are you scared candidate? Do I make you fraking nervous?”*

Moody felt her determination begin to rise in her. “No sir!” she replied confidently.

“What about you Klave? You scared?”

“No sir!” Klave replied.

Percival smiled and nodded, apparently satisfied. “Good. You will be before I’m done with you. Welcome to basic flight, *nuggets*.”

**FLAG SUITE
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
SOMEWHERE IN THE TERRAN ALLIANCE**

Commodore Jonathan Turner smiled and lifted his glass of Ambrosia in a toast along with the other officers and enlisted in the room. “To absent friends.”

“Absent friends.” The others repeated.

“I have a toast, too.” Slider said. “To victory-- This one sure felt damn good.”

“Here, here!” Said Commander Alexander from behind him.

The others raised their glasses in salute and Turner found himself joining in. He took a long sip of the amber liquid and enjoyed the feeling of slight, sweet burn as it made its way down the back of his throat.

Finishing the sip, he sat his glass down and motioned Maddie over to him. “I have some good news for you Maddie.”

“What’s that sir?” she asked as she stepped closer.

Turner pulled her closer. “If I can have your attention,” he said to the group, “Chief Madrid here has been complaining to me recently that we need to promote someone to replace Master Chief Palmer because she is tired of having to fill in as acting C.O.B.”

Everyone chuckled.

“Well I am pleased to announce to you tonight that you are no longer the acting C.O.B.”

“You found someone for the job?” Maddie asked.

“Yes.” Turner replied. “The X.O. and I have asked around the crew and they all said the same thing. During their captivity there was one person who held everyone together. One person who kept them motivated and didn’t let them lose hope. One person who showed the true skills of leadership that was required.”

“Who?” Maddie asked expectantly.

Turner shook his head. “You have no idea who I’m talking about do you?”

“No sir.” Maddie replied with a confused expression.

“Hell Chief, it’s *you*.” Slider said from behind her as he handed a jewel box over to the Commodore.

Maddie’s eyebrows went up in surprise. “No sir, you can’t possibly—”

“One of the positive things to come of this whole appointment to Commodore thing,” Turner cut her off as he opened the box, “is that I have free reign to promote enlisted personnel to whatever rank I need to in order to fill authorized slots. That being said—”

“Attention to orders.” Colonel Ryan said quietly from behind them. “The Ministry of Defense has reposed special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and professional excellence of Chief Petty Officer Theresa Madrid. In view of these qualities, her demonstrated leadership potential and the exceptional bravery that she has shown under combat conditions, she is here by promoted from Chief Petty Officer to Master Chief Petty Officer effective immediately and further appointed to the position of Chief of the Boat by order of Jonathan Turner, Commodore.”

“Congratulations Master Chief.” Turner said as he pinned the green and gold rank pins onto Maddie’s collar.

The new Master Chief took a deep breath to steady herself as he snapped a salute. “Thank you sir.”

Turner returned the salute. “You earned it.”

Applause broke out among the senior officers and Maddie blushed as the full impact of what happened dawned on her.

“Well sir, we’ve promoted everyone who deserved it, repaired our battle damage and thrown a major kink into the plans of the Alliance. What’s next?” Colonel Horvath asked.

“Next?” Turner replied as he picked up the handset that connected him to the C.I.C. “We continue our mission. Mister Halloran, this is the Commodore: Set course out of Alliance space and start the jump clock.”

“Yes sir.”

Turner hung up the phone a second later. “Now let’s find Earth.”