



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

Colonel Karla Horvath: Executive Officer, Gunstar Sentinel

Lt. Colonel Stewart Kelly: Commanding Officer, 7th Marine Expeditionary Regiment

Major Jason "Slider" Allen: C.A.G. Prometheus Air Wing

Major David Briedis: Chief Engineer of the Prometheus

Captain Stacie "Sheba" Percival: Commander of the 82nd Viper Squadron "Aces"

Captain Joshua "Shooter" Wakefield: Commanding Officer, 101st Viper Squadron "Demons"

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

Captain (DR) April Kaplan: Flight Surgeon, Battlestar Prometheus

Captain Allain Halloran: Prometheus Operations Officer

Captain Karen Reiqhney: Helm and Navigation Officer

Captain Louis Greene: Fire Control Officer

Lieutenant Brad "Tiny" Allen: Commanding Officer, 32nd Viper Squadron "Knights"

Lieutenant Rose "Tiger" Hohensee: Commanding Officer, 31st Viper Squadron "Reapers"

Lieutenant Marshall Marqaritell: FTL and Computer Systems Specialist and Assistant Engineering Officer

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

Cadet Ashley "Splashdown" Klave: Former Viper Maintenance crewman, now in training to be a Viper Pilot.

Cadet Melody "Hygiena" Moody: Former Cooks Assistant, now in training to be a Viper Pilot.

FOE

Precentor Malachi Attonos: Commanding Officer of the Alliance Battlecruiser *STORMCROW*

Executor Tyranus Bane: Personal envoy of Sae'tzar, trained assassin and saboteur. Obsessed with recapturing & breaking Colonel Ryan.



PROLOGUE

Woe unto the children of the Gods, these mortal creatures called man! From dust were thou wrought from the ground by the labors and love of thy Gods! Formed in the images of thy creators, too soon ye sought to become their equals!

Falling upon each other like crazed and starving animals, you killed thy brothers and sisters in a quest for greatness that would never be fulfilled. Stealing from one another life's essence, ye sought thy own aggrandizements at the expense of those around you. With poisons did thou pollute the sky and with anger and malice did ye seek the downfall of thy own.

And the Gods who created them wailed tears of remorse for they who had created man, hoping to bring out in their children the noble spirit that they themselves possessed, had forgotten that nobility was a lesson they had to be learned...

And that pain was an excellent teacher.

And thus the Gods watched in horror as their children repeated their own same mistakes until they could bear it no longer. In agony over their loss, they exiled their children to the stars so that they could learn on their own, so that they could evolve.

The Gods wept tears of sorrow as they watched their children leave home for the last time. They cried not for themselves. They cried not for humanity. They cried for an unsuspecting galaxy that they had unleashed monsters upon.

Yet even now the Gods hold out hope. Even now, the Gods open their arms in a forgiving and loving embrace. Even now there is hope for redemption.

Repent of ye sins, oh bitter and miserable man! Repent and enjoy the love of thy Gods! Repent and find the redemption and greatness that ye have so long sought! Repent and find enlightenment! Repent and be welcomed into the afterlife of joy and happiness!

For surely if thou does not repent, you will spend eternity reliving thy mistakes and fighting thyself over and over.

All of this has happened before.

All of this will happen again.

- *“The Promise of Redemption” Holy Scroll of Jocasta, Verse 29*



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ARIES
OUTSIDE OF THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

“Alpha, begin the network start up.” Colonel Ryan said as he turned to face the Cylon yeoman that now acted as his second in command. “Briedis, this ship was made before the ban on defense networks aboard ships. Is it functional and can it handle the defense batteries?”

Major Briedis nodded. “Should be able to sir. I can do a quick functions check--”

“No time for that now. Just get them up and running. If they don’t fire, we’ll know something’s wrong.”

“Yes sir.”

“Helm, bring the engines to emergency thrust and move us into a covering position for the *Prometheus*.” Ryan commanded.

“Aye sir!”

“Sir, the Cylon network is now active.” Alpha reported “Do you wish to authorize the deployment of Centurions at this time?”

Ryan considered his next words carefully. By authorizing the use of Cylon Centurions, he might be setting in motion a disaster of epic proportions. In the end though, it might be the only means of survival available to him and his crew.

He swallowed hard. “The deployment of Cylon Centurions— is authorized.”

“Very good sir.” Alpha replied as his left hand withdrew into his sleeve. Ryan heard a clicking sound and the hand popped out again only this time the hand was replaced by a long thin cylinder with fiber optic data pots on it.

In front of them, on the main situation table, a console opened up and Ryan saw a series of red lights centered above, what looked like, a keyhole. Alpha then took his left hand and inserted the fiber optic key into the hole. There was a loud beep and the lights turned green.

“Centurions active. Downloading instructions.” Alpha reported.

“Wait,” Ryan said suddenly, “I have an idea.”



Deep in the bowels of the ship, in an area known as the Cylon Holding Area, or *Ceeha*, the sounds of mechanical limbs beginning to move after a long dormancy echoed out through the door and into the corridor.

A panicked Marine quickly grabbed the nearest phone and commed the C.I.C. “Sir, we have movement in the Ceeha! Request instructions?”

“Open the door and allow them to move by.” Ryan replied.

“Sir?” the Marine asked, his voice incredulous.

“I said allow them freedom of movement, soldier. They’re working for us.” Ryan said firmly.

“Y-yes sir!” The Marine said as he hung up the phone.

Reaching out he activated the door release and swung it open to find a gleaming Cylon Centurion, its blazing red eye scanning back and forth, staring straight at him.

For a long moment the Centurion and the Marine stared each other down, the Centurion passive and the Marine feeling like he was about to wet himself. Finally, the Centurion stepped forward.

“Centurion Commander Delta one seven one, now active. May we report to our stations sir?”

The Marine’s jaw dropped open. “Y-y-yes. Report to your station.” He stammered.

“By your command.” The Centurion replied.

The robot then executed a precision right face movement and began marching away from the Marine followed by a line of silver Centurions, their metal footfalls sounding like thunder in the corridors of the old Battlestar.

The Marine watched in silence as they all filed past him heading to all areas of the ship. Five minutes later, when the last Centurion had politely closed the door behind him and moved off down the corridor, he picked up the phone again. “Cylons deployed sir.” He reported.

Then he passed out.

CHAPTER 1

BATTLE LINES

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

“Sir, the C.A.G. reports that alert fighters are away and en route to the rally point.” Said Chief Petty Officer Theresa Madrid. “Slider says he’ll be in his cockpit and out the tube in two minutes.”

“Very well.” Commodore Turner replied as he turned to the operations station. “Mister Halloran, bring up the tactical display of the enemy deployment.”

With a flip of a switch the situation table activated and turned into a large display screen. Turner studied it for a moment and then gave his orders. “Maddie, have the Colonel Hall bring his ship into a covering position for the *Ares* and tell Commander Alexander to bring his ship into escort position for the *Prometheus*.”

“Yes sir. Maddie replied.

Turner looked around and then nodded in satisfaction. “Mister Halloran, launch all available fighters and then get your ass down here. You’re the X.O. until I get my colonel back.”

Halloran nodded. “Yes sir. Attention on the flight deck: Launch all fighters. I say again, launch all fighters.”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR ARIES

“Centurions have deployed and are bringing all systems online.” Alpha reported as he withdrew its key hand from the Centurion activation console.

For the life of him, Colonel James Ryan could figure out what to say to that. After all, who in their right mind would be happy that he had just deployed Cylons? “Very well.” He finally replied.

“This is a bad idea sir.” Said Lt. Colonel Stewart Kelly, the commander of the Prometheus Marine contingent, said quietly into Ryan’s ear. “We can’t trust them.”

Ryan considered his words for a moment and then pulled a small remote device from his pocket. “This is our insurance policy.” He whispered.

Kelly nodded. “Where?”

“In the primary and secondary interface matrices.” Ryan replied. “It will send a power surge through the entire Cylon network and incapacitate them.”

Kelly smiled. “Nice sir.”

Ryan nodded and moved away. “All stations: make ready to maneuver.”

COMMAND BRIDGE

BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

“Sir, the enemy is attempting to maneuver into a defensive formation around the unidentified ship.”

“Launch all fighters.” Precentor Attonos commanded. “Instruct the wing commanders to maintain a strong defensive line and have the *Devastator* and the *Dominator* move in and occupy the Gunstars. All other ships are to focus their attack on the Prometheus.”

“And the other Battlestar?” Executor Bane asked, his eyebrow cocked.

“The *Prometheus* is the bigger threat. We can destroy the other ship at our leisure after we are done with her.”

Bane nodded condescendingly. “Very well Precentor, this is your operation.”

Attonos bit back his retort and concentrated on the attack. He was in his element now and ready for the fight to come. “Tell Precentor Jachan to keep his ship on pace with the line or I will find someone who can.”

The communications officer immediately relayed the instruction and the digital representation of the Battlecruiser *Predator* moved quickly back into formation.

Attonos nodded approvingly. “Feed the targeting information to all batteries and stand by to open fire.” He said as he turned to Executor Bane. “Let’s make this sporting shall we?”

He turned back to his communications officer. “Open a channel on all frequencies...”



From the vantage point of his cockpit, Slider watched as the Alliance fighter screen deployed in a wide front and began moving towards his own. From a purely academic standpoint, it was a beautiful sight to behold. The Alliance and Colonial fighter squadrons both flew in perfect formation like two ancient armies of old preparing to throw themselves at each other.

If he didn't remember the deadly seriousness of the situation, he could almost convince himself that it was an aerial demonstration for Colonial Day back home.

Almost.

"All Vipers: Maintain your formation and remain at weapons hold. Nobody fires until I say so, got it?" Slider commanded.

"Demon Six copies." Shooter replied.

"Knight Six copies." Replied Lieutenant Bradley 'Tiny' Allen, the newly appointed commander of Knight Squadron."

"Reaper Six copies." Replied Lieutenant Rose 'Tiger' Hohensee.

"Good. We're outnumbered here so make sure you don't lose your wingmen. Remember your training and you'll come through this just fine."

Slider looked down at his dradis display and frowned. Behind him, he saw a new group of contacts approaching at high speed.

And there were a *lot* of them.

"Prometheus- Slider: New contacts closing from behind us! What the frak are they?"

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

"What the hell is he talking about?" asked Commodore Turner as he spun towards Captain Halloran at the Operations station.

"Sir, it's the Ares- she's launching Vipers!" Halloran announced.

"Get me Colonel Ryan now." Turner ordered.

Halloran went into motion and a moment later Colonel Ryan responded.

“Ares Actual, go ahead sir.”

“Did you give the command to launch Vipers?” Turner asked directly.

“Yes sir. Alpha recommended that we launch our Cylon piloted Vipers to act as a shield against any fighters that make it through the Prometheus fighter screen.”

Turner considered the situation and was prepared to countermand the order but his combat instincts stopped him. After all, the tactics were sound. “Very well,” he finally replied. “Have your fighters take air defense stations around the Prometheus. I’ll order Slider to pull his Vipers from that duty and add them to the assault.”

“Roger that sir.”

Turner disconnected from the Ares and quickly turned to Maddie. “Patch me into Slider.”

“You’re on.” Maddie said a second later.

“Slider, this is Actual. The Vipers approaching from your rear are from the *Ares* and they are going to take up defensive positions around the *Prometheus*. Pull your squadron off station and add them to your assault.”

The line was silent for a moment and Turner knew that Slider was pondering the concept that his commanding officer had gone absolutely insane. “Sir, are you sure that’s wise?” Slider replied in his most diplomatic voice.

“No, but we’re against the wall here.” Turner replied gravely.

“Roger that sir. Reaper Squadron, form up with the rest of us and stand by to break through the enemy fighter screen.” Slider ordered.

“Roger that, Reapers forming up now.” Tiger replied.

Turner returned his gaze to the tactical layout and nodded, seeing everything in place. “Mister Greene, concentrate all main batteries on the lead cruiser. I want her out of action as soon as possible.”

“Aye sir.” Captain Greene replied. “Fire teams, give me a targeting solution on the lead ship.”

“Helm: Sixty degree portside roll, twenty degree down angle on the bow planes.” Turner said.

“Sixty degree portside roll, twenty degree down, aye sir.” Captain Reighney replied.

Turner gripped the console as he began to feel the mighty Prometheus move underneath his feet. He knew that the view from space would be impressive as the enormous Battlestar began to maneuver for battle, but he didn’t have time to contemplate it as he saw the enemy line began to surge forward on dradis.

“Twenty eight hundred sir! Main batteries have a solution on the lead cruiser.” Captain Green reported.

Turner nodded. “Hold fire until I command.”

“Sir, incoming transmission from the enemy commander.” Maddie suddenly announced.

Turner arched his eyebrow. “Push him up on speakers.”

Maddie nodded and flipped a switch. “You’re on sir.”

“This is Commodore Turner. What do you want?”

“Commodore Turner, this is Precentor Attonos of the Terran Alliance Battlecruiser Stormcrow. You are ordered to stand down and surrender your vessel at once. Respond.” A deep voice said over the speakers.

“Yeah right.” Turner mumbled to himself before activating his headset to respond. “Precentor Attonos I appreciate your gesture of civility. Allow me to be equally as civil: Kiss my ass.” He made a gesture and Maddie cut the channel.

“Mister Greene,” Turner said as he faced his gunnery officer, “stand by to fire.”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR ARES

Colonel Ryan moved from the tactical display in the center of the C.I.C. to study the engineering diagram at the back end of the room. Looking at the charts he saw them slowly changing from red to green one at a time as they became operational.

“How long until we are fully operational?” Ryan asked as he approached Major Briedis from behind.

The engineer shook his head. “Frak, these Cylons are fast but not *that* fast.” He mumbled in frustration.

“What was that?” Ryan asked.

“It’s going to be a while sir.” Briedis said brushing it off. “Even with the Cylons help we can only move so fast.”

“Get us *moving* Major. There’s a fight going on out there and I don’t want to be on the sidelines for it.”

“I’m fully aware of that sir.” Briedis growled.

Ryan made ready to dress the man down for his tone but rethought the idea when he realized it was his own frustrations that were bothering him. “Very well, keep at it.”

Ryan turned away and made his way back to the situation table with his gut tightening. “Alpha, what systems are currently available?”

“Sir, we currently have flight, weapons and maneuvering systems online.” The Cylon yeoman dutifully reported.

“That’ll have to be good enough then.” Ryan said. “Helm, bring us about and make for the nearest enemy ship. Alpha, direct all forward batteries to commence fire and have the fighters spread their coverage to form a screen in front of us and the Prometheus.”

“Sir, we don’t even know if the weapons are fully functional yet!” Major Briedis protested.

“Stow it Major.” Lt. Colonel Kelly snapped. “Do your job and make sure that we don’t fall apart.”

“Before the Alliance kills us you mean?”

Kelly made to respond but stayed silent as Ryan held his hand up to restrain him. “Just keep us in one piece, Major.”

CHAPTER 2

THE SMELL OF FEAR

COMMAND BRIDGE

BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

“Enemy fighter screen is approaching our lines sir. What are your orders?”

Precentor Attonos studied the tactical read out closely. Something didn’t feel right to him and he couldn’t quite place his finger on it.

“Sir?” his first officer asked again.

Attonos remained silent for a long moment then turned to reply. “Attack.” He said gravely.

Next to him Executor Bane smiled. “When you send over the boarding parties I will accompany them.”

“There won’t be any boarding parties, Executor.” Attonos replied keeping his gaze on the tactical display.

“What?” Bane asked as he slowly turned to face the Precentor. “What do you mean? We have to capture her! She will be our prize!”

Attonos shook his head dismissively. “I’ll allow you to bring back a piece of her as a trophy but I won’t make the same mistake that other have made. I’m not here to capture the Prometheus, I’m here to *kill* her.”

“Unacceptable Precentor.” Bane said flatly. “You *will* send a boarding party over to capture the Prometheus—”

Precentor Attonos’ hand shot out like a flash and struck Bane so fast that he never saw it coming. One minute he was standing next to the Precentor then next he was sprawled on the floor with the bridge crew looking at him incredulously.

“Young fool,” Attonos said as he stood over the fallen Executor, “Only now do you begin to understand. This was never your mission. It has been and always will be *mine*. Your only glory will come from what I attain here, my way. You can either accept this and share the glory or die, I don’t care which.”

Bane looked up at Attonos with hatred blazing in his eyes. The Precentor knew that the fallen man wanted nothing more at that moment than to strike him dead where he stood. Of course, he was also smart enough to know that if he did, the entire crew would rip him to pieces.

“Glory to you, Precentor.” Bane said reaching up.

Attonos smiled. “And to you, Executor.” He replied reaching down to assist the younger man to his feet.

Pulling the Executor close, Attonos said “Together we will rid the Alliance of its greatest threat and return home heroes.”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR ARES

“Sir, the enemy fleet is advancing.” Lieutenant Colonel Kelly reported.

“What about their fighters?” Colonel Ryan asked.

“The same sir.” Kelly replied. “Their fighters are about five clicks out from ours and closing rapidly.”

“Get me the flagship.”

A moment later, Commodore Turner’s rich baritone voice filled the speakers. “You smell what I smell Colonel?”

“A trap.” Ryan agreed. “Only their Battlecruisers are advancing. The destroyers are waiting back at the edge of dradis range.”

“Contact!” one of the crewmen announced. “The enemy has opened fire on the *Sentinel*.”

“Sir, we’re operational enough to fight over here.” Ryan said.

“I noticed.” Turner replied drily, “Your orders were to remain in a safe position.”

“Safest place is at your side sir.” Ryan replied with a sly grin.

“Very well,” Turner sighed, “bring your ship in behind us and standby to execute a portside crossover.”

“Yes sir.” Ryan replied as he turned to the helm, “All engines one half. Bring us up behind the flagship but keep us out of their radiation wake.”

“Aye sir.” Came the response.



From the confines of his cockpit, Slider watched as the ancient Battlestar slid in behind the *Prometheus* with the grace of a dancer. He couldn’t help but smile, though. The Barge was almost twice the size of the *Ares* and it looked as if a large spaceborne creature was tending to its young.

Suddenly his attention was drawn elsewhere though as fire erupted from the enemy Battlecruisers in front of him. “Ok kiddos, play time is over. Pick your targets and roll. Good hunting!”

Kicking his engines to maximum he shot out ahead of his squadron and located the nearest Alliance *Accipiter* class fighter. Flipping a switch he activated his targeting computer and locked on with one of his Stingray missiles. “Lock and tone- fox one!”

The Stingray missile streaked out from under his Viper’s starboard wing and made a direct line for the enemy fighter. To his credit, the enemy pilot juked right and up quickly to try and avoid the incoming fire but it was too late. The missile slammed into his ship’s engine and it came apart in a flash burst of oxygen and fuel before going cold in the icy black of space.

“Splash one conehead.” Slider announced.

“CAG- Tiny: You’re getting slow old man. I already have three.” Lt. Bradley ‘Tiny’ Allen said sarcastically.

“Shut it.” Slider replied. “Focus and do your job. We’ll score up later.”

“Roger that.” Allen replied, suitably chastised.

“Frakin kids.” Slider mumbled.

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

The C.I.C. shook as another salvo impacted against the Prometheus' armored hull and sent vibrations throughout the ship. Commodore Turner, his face calm and passive, turned to Captain Halloran. "Report."

"Direct hit on the forward dorsal intercooler. Backups coming online now." Halloran reported. "Armor is holding."

Turner paused for a moment before turning to the helm officer. "Captain Reighney, join me down here if you please."

Reighney arched her dark eyebrows for a moment then moved quickly to stand across from the Commodore. "Yes sir?"

"I need someone to act as X.O. for now. You're it until you screw up or get killed."

"Y-yes sir." Reighney replied as she placed the X.O.'s headset on her head.

Turner waited for her to get the headset adjusted then spoke. "Get the damage control teams on that intercooler and coordinate the fighter defense with our Cylon allies."

"Aye sir." She said activating the headset. "This is the X.O.: Damage control team to forward intercooler two."

"Roger that." A voice replied. "D.C. team en route now."

"Mister Green, fire all forward guns." Turner ordered.

"Aye sir, all batteries firing now." The gunnery officer replied.

As the order was relayed throughout the Prometheus batteries, the mighty ship began to belch fire and destruction at her enemies. The sight was horrifying and beautiful as the main guns unleashed their hellish fire on the lead Alliance cruiser.

The NAC-10 rounds found their target as they clammed into the cruiser's bow and for a moment it looks as if the Alliance ship would be able to weather the assault. Then the front of the ship erupted in a fireball of expanding gasses as the forward magazines of the Battlecruiser were breached.

It didn't stop there either.

From his cockpit, Slider watched as the Prometheus weapons fire streaked by him and tore apart the enemy ship. First her bow exploded and then the rest of the ship went up in a series of explosions that moved, almost as if they were coordinated, from the front of the might ship to the back.

Her engines were the last thing to blow apart and they sent large chunks of debris flying out in all directions. One piece even lodged itself into another Alliance Battlecruiser amidships, causing it to list out of control.

“All Vipers: Break through their fighter screen.” He commanded as his guns shredded another Alliance fighter.

“CAG- Tiny:” came the voice of Brad Allen, “I’ve lost six Vipers and the enemy is pulling in reinforcements. I need help or the right flank is going to go.”

Thinking quickly, Slider flipped his channel over to Lt. Hohensee. “Reaper Six- CAG: Leave half your squadron here with me and take the other half to support Knight Squadron.”

“CAG- Tiger: Understood. Moving now.” Hohensee replied.

Slider checked his dradis display and noted that she was following her orders perfectly. Switching his radio back over he contacted Lt. Allen. “Knight Six- CAG: Help is on the way.”

“Roger that.” Allen replied.

“CAG- Prometheus: Actual wants a sitrep.” the voice of Captain Reighney said suddenly.

Slider checked his dradis display again and frowned. “Prometheus- CAG: Sitrep not good. We’re holding the line here but they’re tossing everything at us but holding back their big boys so we can’t reach them.”

“Can you break through?” Reighney asked.

“Doubtful.” Slider replied.

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR ARES

Inside the C.I.C. of the Ares, Colonel Ryan listened intently to the conversation going on between the Prometheus and Slider. “Get me the flagship.”

“You’re on sir.” Alpha moment later.

“Prometheus Actual this is Ares Actual: I can move my squadrons off of screening duty and use them to try and punch a hole in the enemy screen.” Ryan said.

“I don’t know if I want to take that step yet.” Turner replied after a moment of hesitation. “It’s one thing to have the Cylons covering our backs, a completely different thing to send them into the fray.”

“Sir, we may not have much of a choice.” Slider’s voice broke in. “They outnumber us three to one and we’re losing ships. We’ve got a three to one kill ratio going and they still outnumber us four to one.”

The comm line was quiet for a long moment as Turner considered the options but finally he replied. “Very well Colonel. The CAG will fix the enemy fighters in place. Send your fighters in and have them punch a hole through the enemy lines. Once they’re through they are to attack the Alliance main line and cause as much damage as possible.”

“Understood.” Colonel Ryan replied turning to Alpha. “Get me the squadron commander.”

“Sir,” Alpha said, “I can use the network to relay your orders.”

“No.” Ryan replied. “I’m sending them into harm’s way. The least I can do is order them myself.”

“By your command.” Alpha replied.

A moment later the monotone robotic voice of a Cylon Centurion replied. “Squadron Commander Constellation Six, by your command.”

“Constellation Six this is Ares Actual: The Prometheus air wing is going to fix the enemy in place. Your orders are to punch through the enemy fighter screen and attack the main battle line from the rear.”

“Understood. Complying with orders”

On the dradis screen Ryan saw the Mark II Vipers and Raiders pull off of their assigned flight stations and make their way towards the enemy lines. “Ares squadrons are closing with the enemy now sir.”

“Good.” Ryan replied, “Is it safe to assume that your Raiders fulfill the same function as our Raptors do?”

Alpha cocked his head to the side for a moment as he downloaded the specs of the Raptor and compared them with the specs of the Cylon Raider. “They were designed for the same role but the Raider is faster, more agile and better armed than your Raptors.”

“Good.” Ryan nodded. “Once the Vipers break through, have the Raiders use their anti-ship missiles and do as much damage as possible.”

COMMAND BRIDGE

BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

“Sir, the enemy fighter screen is holding.” The flight officer of the Stormcrow reported. “However they are beginning to suffer heavy losses.”

“It’s just a matter of time now.” Attonos replied, “It’s turning into a war of attrition and we have the advantage, Executor.”

Standing next to him Bane remained stoic and silent, his arms folded over his chest and his cowl pulled up to hide the black eye forming on him.

Attonos smiled. “Come now Executor. Don’t let your wounded pride get in the way of enjoying the moment.”

“Sir, we have identified the new ship in the Colonial formation.” The Stormcrow’s first officer announced. “She’s the Battlestar Ares sir.”

“Ares? The Battlestar *Ares itself*?” Bane asked, his head snapping around.

“Yes Executor.” The first officer replied. “We intercepted transmissions from them to the Prometheus. It seems that Colonel Ryan has taken command of that ship.”

“What’s so important about the Ares?” Attonos asked.

Bane, however, didn’t seem to hear him. His eyes had taken on a glassy look and his gloved hands were clenched in anger. “Ryan...”

“Executor? Executor!”

Bane snapped his head around as if slapped and his eyes flashed with rage. “What is it?”

“What is so important about the Battlestar Ares?” Attonos pressed.

It took a moment for the far off look to clear from Bane’s face but when he finally responded he still sounded as if his mind were elsewhere. “As I explained before, the *Ares* class was the first of the Colonial Battlestars. Most of them were manned primarily by humans but the first three ships were manned equally by Cylons, their artificially intelligent robots.”

“The same ones that turned on and almost destroyed them?” Attonos asked.

“Yes.” Bane replied, “And now Colonel James Ryan is in command of a force of robots that could do the same to us.”

Attonos stroked his chin thoughtfully. “There could be an opportunity here.” He said. “Imagine if we had this technology. We could reverse engineer it to serve our needs. No more mass conscriptions, no more uprisings. We could build our armies and conquer all of known space.”

“Yes we could,” Bane replied with a sly grin, “But we need to capture the Ares and Colonel Ryan to do it.”

Attonos chuckled. “You really are obsessed with recapturing Ryan aren’t you, Executor?”

“He is the key to it all, Precentor. If he is in command of the Ares then he has the command codes to control the Cylons. We will need him in order to accomplish our plans.”

Attonos nodded. “I agree. However, capturing him is a secondary concern. We can always dig the codes out of someone else if needs be.”

“But—”

“Remember your place Executor.” Attonos growled. “We will capture the Ares but your quest for revenge is secondary. Clear?”

“Yes, Precentor.” Bane hissed.

“Good.” Attonos replied, patting Bane on the back. “Soon the Prometheus will be destroyed, the Ares and her secrets will be in our hands and, Jupiter willing, you will have James Ryan back in your clutches do with whatever you like.”

CHAPTER 3

STORM WINDS

MEDBAY, WARD FOUR

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Captain Stacie Percival and Cadet Melody Moody both sat by the bed of Cadet Ashley Klave as the ship rocked around them. Both women held a hand of their unconscious friend while the sounds of the life monitor behind them quietly kept tempo with Ashley’s heartbeat.

“Captain Percival?”

Stacie looked up to see Doctor Kaplan standing outside the curtain that separated Klave from the rest of the ward. Getting up slowly, her muscles still sore, she made her way to where the doctor stood. “What’s up?”

“We just got the DNA results back from her rape kit.” Kaplan said gravely.

“Who was the bastard who did this?”

“Crewman 1st Class Hett.” Kaplan replied. “His was the only DNA we found.”

Stacie nodded her head as she put a face to the name. She remembered seeing him many times on the flight deck He was always leering lecherously at a female or talking too loud. “How did the STD screen come back?” she asked quietly as the ship rocked again.

“No STD’s.”

“Amazing considering what I’ve heard about the guy.” Stacie said. “Anything else?”

“Yeah,” Kaplan sighed, “I found traces of a Flunitrazepam in her system. It’s a date rape drug. He probably slipped it into her drink.”

Stacie nodded as her guts wrapped themselves into knots.

“Doc, we have casualties inbound!” a voice shouted from behind them. “Two pilots with burns and hypoxia and one with shrapnel in her side.”

“Gotta go.” Kaplan said as she spun around. “Ok, break out the portable hyperbaric systems for the two hypoxic pilots as well as the burn kits and get Doctor Keeton on the shrapnel casualty.”

Stacie watched the doc leave and was about to move back to Klave’s side when Captain Reighney’s voice echoed through the ward. “Pass the word throughout the ship: Captain Percival, contact C.I.C. immediately.”

Arching her eyebrows in question, Stacie made her way to the wall mounted phone and picked it up. “Captain Percival to C.I.C.”

“Sheba, this is the X.O.,” Reighney said, “We’ve had heavy losses and the Commodore has ordered anyone who’s qualified and physically able to get in the cockpit immediately. He needs to know how many of your cadets can hold their own.”

“Not that many.” Stacie replied honestly as she looked over her shoulder at Moody. “But I know of a few who can handle it. Pass the word to all the flight cadets to meet me in starboard hangar two and tell the Commodore that we’ll be ready for launch in five minutes.”

“Roger that.” Was Reighney’s reply, followed by a click as she hung up the phone.

“Hygiena, get up and follow me.” Stacie said as she replaced the handset in its slot on the wall.

“What’s wrong?” Moody asked as she rose to her feet.

“The CAG needs every pilot he can find right now. It’s time to earn your pay.”

“You want me to fly *combat*?” Hygiena asked incredulously.

“You’re the best pilot I have in the class, now let’s go.”

Moody moved to follow her. “I’m with you sir, but what about Splashdown?”

Stacie smiled grimly. “She’ll be fine until we get back,” she said, “and when we do... its payback time.”



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Commodore Turner watched as the battle unfolded in front of him on the dradis screen and frowned. “Those destroyers are still holding position.” He mumbled to himself. “What are they waiting for?”

“I don’t know sir.” Captain Reighney replied. “Mister Halloran: Are the destroyers doing anything besides sitting there?”

“No sir.” Halloran replied. “They’re maintaining a standard jump formation but they’re not moving.”

“Jump formation?” Turner asked, his curiosity piqued. “What’s the status of their FTL drives?”

“Their FTL drives spun up and active, sir.” Halloran said.

Turner rubbed his temples as he considered the situation. Something didn’t seem to be making sense to him but he couldn’t figure out what. “Are Sheba and her cadets moving yet?”

“Yes sir.”

“Have Sheba take a Raptor and prepare to jump out on a recon mission.” Turner commanded as he turned to face Halloran. “Send her the coordinates of that formation and tell her to jump out there and do a close range scan of those ships, then jump back. Tell her not to engage the enemy.”

“Yes sir.” The X.O. responded.

“Prometheus- Slider:” the haggard voice of Major Allen broke in, “The Cylons aren’t having any effect. The enemy fighter screen is just too heavy. There’s just no way we can break through.”

“Sheba is outbound sir. Thirty seconds until she jumps.” Reighney reported.

Turner nodded and activated his headset. “Slider- Prometheus Actual: Can you hold the enemy fighters in place?”

“No sir. It’s only a matter of time until they break through.”

Suddenly the ship shook violently and Turner had to brace himself to keep from falling as sparks flew and smoke billowed into the room. “Report!”

“Direct hit on Main Battery number three.” Halloran said above the keening alarm.

“Mister Greene, how bad is it?” Turner asked as the ship continued to vibrate under his feet.

“We’ve lost the gun sir, it’s been totally destroyed.” The Fire Control Officer responded. “We also have fires in the number three magazine.”

“Frak.” Halloran said as he picked up his handset. “Fire Suppression teams to Magazine Three!”

“Belay that order.” Turner shouted. “Standby to vent the magazine.”

“Sir, I have people in there.” Greene protested.

Turner paid him no mind. “X.O. begin emergency vent of magazine number three.”

Reighney swallowed hard. “Yes sir.” She said as she opened up the emergency damage control board. Looking down she selected the Emergency Vent option and programmed in the code to activate it.

“*Now* captain!” Turner barked.

Before she even realized she had done it, Reighney touched the button to activate the sequence.

“Fires are out.” Halloran reported quietly.

Turner nodded. “Get a D.C. and a medical team up there to check for survivors.”

Reighney took a deep and steadying breath as she regained her composure while feeling embarrassment was over her. Looking up she expected to see Turner glaring at her disapprovingly. Instead he fixed her with an understanding gaze and patted her hand.

“You did fine, Captain.” He said reassuringly, then added “Welcome to the big leagues.”



“Get back here you mother fraker.” Slider snarled as he flipped his Viper over and began a high speed pursuit of an Alliance fighter that had just destroyed a member of his squadron.

“CAG- Tiny: SAR bird has a lock on Homer and is en route to him now.”

“Roger that.” Slider replied as he struggled to get a weapons lock on his fleeing enemy. “Damn, this son of a bitch is *good*.”

“Having issues there CAG?” Tiny asked with mirth in his voice.

“Pay attention to your own ass, Tiny.” Slider snapped.

“CAG- Tiger: We’re in deep shit over here. I don’t think we can— Damn it! Bandits have broken through our line! They’re making a straight shot for the Barge.”

“How many got through?” Slider asked, trying to keep his concentration on the fighter in front of him.

“Only four. Should we break and pursue?” Hohensee asked.

“No.” Slider replied as he juked his Viper to the left to avoid stray fire from another ship. “Reform your screen. Tiny: send two birds to—”

“Prometheus CAG this is Constellation Six:” a flat robotic voice broke in, “Enemy fighters have been destroyed. The Prometheus is clear.”

Slider arched his eyebrows in surprise. “I never thought I would be saying this to a Cylon but thanks. Form your squadron up and reinforce the right flank.”

“By your command.”

Slider was about to remark on the reply but suddenly his prey got aggressive, flipping his fighter over and darting straight for him, guns blazing.

Thinking quickly Slider pulled back on his stick and sent his Viper over the enemy fighter while adjusting his nose downward so that he was pointing straight down that the enemy as he moved past.

A casual observer would think that his Viper doing a flip over the Alliance Accipiter looked easy, and to Slider, it almost was.

Everything was crystal clear and in slow motion as he sighted in his guns and tightened his finger on the trigger. He could even see the enemy pilot in sitting in his- no wait, *her* cockpit!

The pilot who had been playing hell with him was a female! This made him almost reconsider pulling the trigger. Instead he adjusted his aim so that he would hit her engines, not her cockpit.

He squeezed the trigger just as she looked up and his breath caught in his throat.

“Oh hell no!” he said to himself.

An instant later the ship disintegrated into shrapnel and the pilot shot from her cockpit on her ejection seat.

Slider shook his head hard to clear the familiar face he had seen from his mind but he knew it would haunt him until he got back and saw her on the deck, safe and sound.



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

“Prometheus- Sheba: Jump complete. Starting scan now. Whoa!”

“What’s wrong Sheba?” Turner asked.

Sheba chuckled. “I think they’re pissed because we dropped in on them sir. We’re catching one hell of a firestorm here.”

“No heroics Sheba. Just get the readings and get out.” Turner reminded her.

“Don’t worry sir, I left my nukes at home” Sheba replied, “Besides, I have the nugget with me. Can’t do any suicide runs with her in the cockpit.”

Turner chuckled, his calm demeanor not showing any signs of stress. “Nice to have a sense of humor while we’re fighting for our lives.”

Captain Reighney, however, looked a little more worried. “If you say so sir.”

“Battlestar Prometheus this is the Battlestar Ares:” the voice of Colonel Ryan broke in, “Our FTL is up and functional. We’re beginning jump prep now.”

“Good timing Colonel.” Turner replied. “We’re sending the coded jump coordinates now.”

“Begin jump prep.” Reighney ordered. “Halloran, stand by to get our birds back in the nest.”

“Yes sir.” Halloran replied.

“Prometheus-Sheba: The Destroyers are moving. I think they’re getting ready to jump.”

Turner arched an eyebrow. Then it hit him.

“That’s what they’ve been waiting on.”

“Sir?” Reighney asked.

“That’s why they haven’t been pushing. They’ve been waiting for us to spin up our FTL drives.” Turner replied.

“Why?”

“Because that’s when we’re most vulnerable.” Turner explained. “Our jump systems use more energy than most. It pushes the reactors hard and they get close to threshold in the moments before we jump. If they hit the FTL capacitors with enough firepower to cause a discharge while we’re spinning up for a jump...”

“The gravity distortion would tear the ship apart.” Halloran finished.

“Prometheus- Sheba: The enemy destroyers have jumped.”

“All hands braced for contact.” Turner ordered just as the deck lurched violently beneath his feet.

“Sir, all ten destroyers have jumped into point blank range and are now firing on us.” Halloran reported.

“Direct hits to the portside aft FTL capacitors.” Reighney said as alarms blared around her.

“Helm: Execute a ninety degree starboard roll.” Turner ordered turning to Captain Greene. “All guns: Weapons free”

“Sir, the enemy fighters have broken through our screen and the Alliance Battlecruisers are now closing on us.” Halloran said.

“We’re about to get fraked hard sir. What are your orders?” Reighney asked.

Turner swallowed hard. “Contact Colonel Ryan and tell him we are preparing for an emergency jump.”

“Sir, it’s going to take them at least another five minutes for them to be jump ready. If we leave they’re sitting ducks.” Halloran said.

Turner nodded. “I know. But if we don’t we’re *all dead*.”

CHAPTER 4

FROM HELLS HEART

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR ARES

“Message from the flagship, sir. The Commodore wishes to speak with you.”

Ryan nodded and picked up the old handset. “Go ahead sir.”

“They’re targeting our FTL capacitors, Colonel. We’re going to have to jump.”

Ryan heard the concern in Turner’s voice and immediately knew that the situation must be bad. “Understood sir. We’ll try and draw their fire for you.”

“Thank you Colonel.” Turner replied with a note of finality.

“We’ll see you on the other side sir.” Ryan replied closing off the channel. “Open a general channel, all frequencies, no encryption.”

“Sir?” Alpha asked. “Are you sure that’s wise?”

Ryan smiled mischievously. “Open the channel.”

Alpha complied dutifully. “Channel open sir.”

Ryan cleared his throat and steeled himself. He was going on a hunch with no concrete evidence. If his hunch was wrong, then this would be all for nothing.

“Attention Alliance Fleet: This is Colonel James Ryan aboard the Colonial Battlestar Ares. My message is for Executor Tyranus Bane. I know you’re out there...”

COMMAND BRIDGE

BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

“Attention Alliance Fleet: This is Colonel James Ryan aboard the Colonial Battlestar Ares. My message is for Executor Tyranus Bane. I know you’re out there...”

Precentor Attonos smiled at the obvious psychological tactic that Ryan was employing. Next to him, Executor Bane was a twitching mass of excitement.

“Open a channel to him.” Bane said.

The communications crewman looked at Attonos in question. Attonos nodded and he complied with Bane’s order. “Go ahead sir.”

Bane smiled. “Hello Colonel. So good of you to let me know where you are. That will make it much easier to take you back into custody once we have destroyed the *Prometheus*.”

“You’ll find that the *Prometheus* is more difficult to destroy than you think.” Ryan laughed harshly. “And as for me being back in your custody? *Not going happen*. You’re not smart enough to fool me a second time.”

Attonos almost laughed out loud watching Bane’s reactions to Ryan’s words. The Executor’s face was visibly darkening even as he struggled to maintain control of his emotions.

“You fell easily enough into my hands before, my dear Colonel.” Bane replied through gritted teeth.

“That’s because we had no way of knowing who you were. Your support personnel had done enough work to cover your clumsy tracks, although I hate to think of the lengths they went to since you were so sloppy. I guess that’s the price you pay for the second rate education of a common street rat.”

Bane’s eyes blazed with fury now and Attonos knew that the Colonel had found the chink in Bane’s armor. “This conversation can serve no further purpose. Close the channel.”

“NO!” Bane shouted. “Keep the channel open.”

Attonos fixed an incredulous gaze on Bane, momentarily shocked into silence by the Executor's outburst. He took this as his cue to continue.

"You will be in my custody shortly, Colonel and I look forward to continuing our conversations."

"I don't look forward to conversations with sadistic and uneducated thugs like you." Ryan snapped back, "Besides, you have to catch me first and I just don't see that happening."

"What is the position of the Ares?" Bane asked, spinning on the first officer.

"She's moving away from the fight towards the Mutara Gas Cloud."

Bane spun back to the helm officer. "Pursuit course *now!*"

"Belay that." Attonos cut in. "We are not—"

The Precentor's voice was cut off by the sound of a pistol firing into his face. Attonos dead body fell to the floor in a heap, its legs still twitching from the shock of his violent demise as the pink mist of his blood and brain matter floated downward like a gentle rain.

Bane turned to see the shocked expressions on the face of the crew, many of which looked ready to attack him. "If any harm comes to me," he said slowly, "instructions have been left to track down the family of every crewmember of this ship and deal with them accordingly. Obey my instructions, however, and you will receive a great reward."

The crew continued to stare at him, each man making the decision in his own head. Then tension continued to build for a long moment and Bane began to wonder if the crew would call his bluff. Then the first officer spoke for them all. "What are your orders sir?"

Bane smiled. He loved power. "Have all of the Battlecruisers break off and pursue the Ares. The Destroyers can finish the Prometheus."

As the crew moved to comply Bane smiled and activated his communicator. "Brace yourself Colonel. I'm coming for you and when I have you in my grasp again, I won't be as merciful as I was the last time."



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

"Sir! The enemy Battlecruisers are breaking off and pursuing the Ares!" Halloran said as another enemy volley shook the Prometheus hard.

"What about the destroyers?" Turner asked.

“They’re holding position sir.” Replied Captain Reighney. “But without the Battlecruisers to support them—”

“We’re in much better shape.” Turner agreed. “FTL status?”

“Our drives are spinning up but it’s taking longer because of the damaged capacitor.”

Turner nodded. “Keep on it. Weapons: Lock our main guns onto the closest destroyer and stand by for salvo fire.” The Commodore said as he turned to the helm. “Helm: Starboard roll program. Bring our guns to bear on the enemy.”

The mighty *Prometheus* began to move, slowly at first then picking up speed as the straining attitude thrusters brought the massive ship around on her long axis.

Watching on the status screens from the C.I.C. Turner waited until the starboard side NAC-10 batteries were facing down their enemies. He then turned to Captain Greene, the Fire Control Officer. “Mister Greene, all guns: Fire as you bear.”

Captain Greene, an experienced veteran at his job turned to his console and input the new commands. “All batteries: lock onto this target and fire as you bear.”

The scene that unfolded was horrific and beautiful all at once. The starboard batteries, now locked onto a single target, unleashed their fury at the hapless destroyer. The first rounds slammed into slender center and the ship shook violently. The second and third rounds slammed into the front and back of the ship punching holes in its weak armor. It only took one more hit on the engine section to cause the ship to sputter and then explode.

“Sir, portside batteries are requesting a new target.” Captain Greene reported with a smile.

“Weapons free, Captain. Give ‘em hell.” Turner responded.

“With pleasure, sir.” Green said turning back to his console. “All batteries: Weapons free.”

The *Prometheus* turned into a vengeful god in space as all her batteries opened up and began to rain fire on the enemy destroyers. No longer supported by their larger brethren, the destroyers were easy targets for the Barge’s main guns.

Ships shuddered and withered under the hail of fire and it wasn’t long before they gave up their fight and began to withdraw.

“Sir, the enemy is withdrawing and our FTL is spun up and ready to go.” Captain Reighney said.

“Notify the CAG to get our birds on the deck.” Turner replied. “To all commands: Execute jump to rally point alpha.”



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR ARES

“The Battlecruisers are pursuing us sir and the lead cruiser is pulling ahead of the formation. It should be within range of our guns in one minute.” Alpha reported from his station.

“That’ll be Bane.” Ryan said as he studied the navigation readout. “Alpha, did you ever do any scans of the gas cloud?”

“Yes sir, although our results were limited. We launched one probe into the cloud but it had a cracked reactor housing. The radiation caused some kind of reaction and an explosion occurred.”

“You say an exposed radioactive source caused an explosive reaction in the gas?”

“Yes sir.”

Ryan began to consider his options, quickly running through his astrophysics knowledge in his head. “Did you happen to get an estimated yield from that explosion?”

“Yes we did sir.” Alpha replied, “We calculated that the explosive power was equal to that of a low yield nuclear device.”

“Major Briedis, how much of a radioactive signature will the Ares give off when we jump?”

“A lot more than a standard probe would.” Briedis said as he caught on to Ryan’s idea. “These older ships didn’t have the optimized jump system like we have now. They left a large radioactive footprint when they jumped.”

“Good. Land our birds as quickly as you can and prepare to jump.” Ryan said turning to the helmsman. “All engines ahead full. Make for the gas cloud at best possible speed.”

“Yes sir.”



COMMAND BRIDGE

ALLIANCE BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

Executor Bane watched his viewscreen with satisfaction as the distance between his ship and the Ares closed. The crew had removed the body of their former commanding officer and was accepting his orders without reservation now.

“Sir, if they go into that gas cloud we’re going to lose them.” The first officer said.

“Why?” Bane asked, turning his withering gaze on the man.

“Sir that cloud is full of gasses that don’t react well to radiation. We’ll risk destroying the ship if we follow them in there.” He answered.

Bane remained silent and the helmsman took it as consent. “Reducing speed.”

Bane turned but said nothing as the ship slowed.

“Sir, the Prometheus and her escorts have jumped away.” The first officer reported from behind him.

“Lock anti-ship missiles on the Ares engine section and fire when ready.” Bane commanded.

“Anti-ship missiles locked on sir but we’re at extreme range.”

“Fire.”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER

BATTLESTAR ARES

“Enemy missile launch.” Lt. Col. Kelly announced calmly from the X.O.’s position as he studied the approaching weapons on the dradis screen.

“How many?” Ryan asked, not taking his eyes away from the forward scan.

“Twenty, sir.”

“Time to contact?”

“Ninety seconds.”

“Countermeasures?” Ryan asked, turning to his Cylon yeoman.

“Offline.” Alpha replied.

“Damn.” Ryan cursed as he picked up the communications handset. “All hands: brace for contact. Damage control teams: standby.”

“Sir, we have still have fighters in the air.” Alpha suggested.

Ryan nodded. “Instruct them to take out the enemy missiles.”

Everyone in the Ares C.I.C. watched anxiously as the last three Cylon fighters approached the incoming missiles. It didn’t take long for the Cylons to do their work.

“Ten missiles destroyed sir, ten still inbound. Impact in five seconds.” Alpha reported.

“Hold on every—” Ryan began, only to be cut off by as the Ares shook violently.

“Report!”

“Direct hit on the portside dorsal engine. We’re venting drive plasma.” Kelly answered as the ship shook again.

“Direct hit to the dorsal power junction. All Main batteries are without power.” Alpha reported.

Sparks flew and clouds billowed from ruptured pressure lines as Ryan looked around the C.I.C. of the Ares. Deep in his gut he knew the truth: The Ares wasn’t going to be able to take the pounding.

“How close is the *Stormcrow*?” he asked.

“She is staying just outside of the gas cloud. Range: Forty thousand meters.” Alpha said.

“How many fighters were we able to recover?”

“Approximately half of our number.”

He shook his head and activated the general comm. system. “Attention all hands: Abandon ship. I say again, abandon ship. All personnel report to your escape vehicles.”

“Colonel Kelly, go to the portside hangar and organize the evacuation. I’m going to stay here and hold off the enemy for a few moments.” Ryan ordered quietly.

“Sir, I—” Kelly’s argument was cut off by a harsh glare from Ryan. Instead he simply nodded. “It’s been an honor sir.”

Ryan smiled. "I'm not through yet. See you on the other side."

Kelly saluted and then departed leaving Ryan alone with the other Cylons in the C.I.C.

"I said abandon ship, Alpha. That means you guys too."

"With all respect sir, we would rather stay aboard the Ares with you." Alpha replied.

Ryan stared incredulously at the Cylon for a moment then nodded. "Okay then. Spin up the FTL drive. We're going out with a bang."

"You do realize that when we jump it will cause a catastrophic reaction in the gas cloud?" Alpha asked.

"Yes." Ryan nodded.

"Sir, it is highly probable that the Ares will be destroyed, along with everyone aboard her."

"I know, and I'm sorry Alpha."

"No need to apologize sir. We were built to serve and we will continue to do so until the end."

"All escape vehicles are away." A Centurion monitoring the flight deck announced.

"Put me through on general frequency." Ryan commanded.



COMMAND BRIDGE

ALLIANCE BATTLECRUISER STORMCROW

"Yes." Tyranus hissed through clenched teeth as he observed the numerous missile impacts against the Ares. "Burn, Ryan, *BURN!*"

"Sir, transmission from the enemy commander. He wishes to discuss terms of surrender."

Bane arched his eyebrows. "Put him through."

Static burst in the room for a moment followed by Ryan's voice. "Attention Executor Bane: I hereby surrender this ship and await your boarding parties."

Bane smiled. “I accept your surrender, Colonel.” He replied arrogantly. “Stand by to be boarded.

He turned to his first officer. “Launch the assault teams.”

“Sir, I’m detecting a buildup in the Ares FTL system.” A voice announced fearfully.

“What?” Bane demanded as he spun on the crewman. “Is he insane?”

“Colonel Ryan, what are you doing?” he demanded over the radio.

Ryan’s laughter was the only answer he got as the Ares activated her jump drive.

“Sir, massive energy wav closing from the front!”

Bane looked at the sensor read out and knew he was doomed. Too close to the cloud to do anything but die in place, the last thoughts that went through his mind were to wonder how in the hell Colonel James L. Ryan ever out smarted him.

Then there was nothing but fire and darkness.



EPILOGUE

WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND

Pain, like a hot poker going through his mind. This is what he felt as he started awake. Feeling around with his hands he took a deep breath and noted the pool of goo he was in.

“Where am I?” he gasped as air filled his lungs.

“You’re safe,” a familiar voice said to him, “Don’t worry brother. Everything is alright now.”

He closed his eyes and forced himself to remember the last thing he had seen. “Fire,” he said, “I was burning alive...”

“That’s behind you now. Open your eyes and see your new life.”

Opening his eyes he saw a room full of familiar faces. Many of the faces were his own and everything came flooding back in a great moment of clarity.

His life, his mission, everything.

“I’m—home.” He said.

“Yes Brother.” Aaron Doral said to the man in the pool, the man with his face. “You’re home now. Your mission is complete and now it’s time for your reward: Eternal life as a hero of the Cylon.”

Everything he wanted, everything he ever desired, now his.

Tyranus Bane smiled and embraced his new life.

FLAG SUITE

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE THE TERRAN ALLIANCE

“We saw the Ares jump a moment before we did sir.” Lt. Col. Kelly reported as Commodore Turner listened with a pained expression. “We jumped right afterwards to avoid the blast wave.”

“Based on the readings our Raptor took of the energy wave before we jumped, I don’t see how the *Ares* could have survived.” Major Briedis said.

“Did you *actually* see her destroyed?” The Commodore asked.

“No sir,” Kelley said, “But she was in pad shape when we abandoned her. I don’t see how she could have made it.”

Turner shook his head. “Very well, thank you gentlemen. Go see the Doc and then get some rack time.”

Both men saluted quietly and departed leaving Turner alone in his room.

Looking to his desk he caught sight of a photo of him and Ryan. In it they stood side by side along with *then* Commander Cain and Major Belzer, the Pegasus Operations Officer.

Feeling the icy twisting of his emotions he picked up the phone and punched in the code he kept to himself.

“Officer’s billet, Captain Reighney speaking.” The voice answered.

“I-” Turner began, “I need a friendly shoulder. Are you available?”

The line was silent for a moment before she replied. “I’m on the way.”

He hung up the line and leaned back in his chair. By the time Reighney arrived the tears were beginning to roll down his cheeks. Seeing this, she moved inside quickly and closed the door behind her.

“It’s okay,” she said as she pulled him into her arms. “I’m here now baby.”

And Jonathan Turner cried.

This Episode is dedicated to SSG Gary Robertson of the 4th Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, U.S. Army serving in Iraq. Good hunting brother. Come home safe and come home soon.

