



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 Karla Horvath: Executive Officer, Battlestar Prometheus

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 (DR) April Kaplan: Flight Surgeon, Battlestar Prometheus

Captain Allain Halloran: Prometheus Operations Officer

Captain Karen Reighney: Helm and Navigation Officer

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

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

Ensign Ashley "Splashdown" Klave: Pilot, 32nd Viper Squadron "Knights"

Ensign Melody "Hygiena" Moody: Pilot, 32nd Viper Squadron "Knights"



PROLOGUE

SAGA OF A STAR

WORLD

There are those who believe that life here began out there. That is how the story began. Tribes of humans set out from their home world of Kobol to go out into the stars and settle new homes on distant worlds around distant suns. But that isn't what this story is about.

This is a story about endings.

It is a story that happened a long time ago. It's over now and nothing can be done to change it. It's the story about the best of humanity and the accomplishments they had achieved: Faster than light travel, colonization of foreign worlds and star systems, even the creation of life itself. It is also a story about the worst of humanity: Greed, lust for power, arrogance and revenge.

This is the story about the end of an age.

A funny thing about stories: Although this happened so long ago that time itself has forgotten it, it is also happening again, right here, right now.

This is how four thousand years of progress, struggle, trial, tribulation and triumph, comes to an end in one dark and violent day where the children of humanities' best qualities and intentions come home to remind their parents of their darker nature.

It is a tragedy like no other. Darkness is falling not just on the Twelve Colonies of Kobol, but on the human race itself. A long cold night awaits those who will survive this great cataclysm and on the other side of that?

Nobody knows.

But humanity is nothing if not resilient. The universe is a cruel, cold and unforgiving place but humanity is resourceful and strong willed. If anyone can survive the long dark night that that is coming, they can.

This might be the end of an age, but fear not: The human race still has heroes. People named Adama and Nagala, Roslin and Cain, Turner and Connors.

And with these heroes, humanity has saved it's best for last.

This is the final annihilation of the life form known as man.

The end starts now.

PORTSIDE HANGAR DECK BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

The Colonial flags had been hung with meticulous care and Commodore Jonathan Turner took notice of it as he marched to the podium that awaited him. Assembled in front of him were the most crew of the *Prometheus* and representatives from the Gunstars *Sentinel* and *Vigilant*.

All of them were dressed in their finest. Their boots were polished to a high shine and the medals on their dress uniforms gleamed in the harsh light of the hangar bay. All in all, it was a sight to behold and it was rightly so.

Because *this* ceremony had been paid for by their dearest blood.

As he approached the podium he caught site of the picture in front of it and felt his chest tighten. Pictured was Admiral Cain, then wearing the rank of Commander, Major Belzer, the Operations officer of the *Pegasus*, himself and a very young looking Major James L. Ryan III.

It had been taken the day before he and Ryan had been promoted respectively to Commander and Colonel. Turner remembered it as being a happy day for all. He had finally been given a command of his own, even though the *Prometheus* had been six months from completion at the time. Ryan had been promoted to Colonel, one of the youngest people ever to wear the rank. Cain had been selected for the Admiralty, an honor that Turner felt that she more than deserved, and Belzer had been handpicked to be his successor as X.O. of the *Pegasus*.

The memory brought a smile to Turner's face as he took his place behind the podium and cleared his throat.

"We're here today to pay homage to our honored comrade, Colonel James L. Ryan III." He began quietly. "He was—well, James was something else." This got a chuckle from the crowd and it made Turner's smile grow as he continued. "When I first met a *very young* Lieutenant

Ryan aboard the Battlestar Valkyrie the first thought that came to mind was ‘what is a super model doing on my flight deck?’”

Again, the crowd laughed as Turner recounted his memories. “What I found out was that this brash young man with the blonde hair and blue eyes was one of the best pilots I had ever seen. He could make a Viper dance without breaking a sweat and he had a firm understanding of tactics and strategy so, when the first opportunity came along, I promoted him to Captain and gave him a squadron to command. The rest, as they say, was history.”

“Jim Ryan was my protégé’. He was the legacy I had intended to leave behind when I finally left the service. For the last ten years he’s followed me from assignment to assignment and I did my best to mentor and develop him as a leader. I’m proud to say he learned his lessons well because when it came down to it, there was no one I could count on more than him.”

“Today we mourn the loss of not just a good officer, but also a good friend. I came to rely on his counsel and advice. He was a reservoir of strength I could draw upon when the going got tough. He was loyal and compassionate and always the professional and I will miss him.”

Turner paused to look around the audience and he could see his own grief reflected in the faces of his crew. “Although we mourn,” he continued as his voice gained in both volume and power, “we must also celebrate the life he lived and the success he helped to bring to us. He died so that humanity could be reunited as one family again. He died in the service of something greater than himself, greater than *all of us*.”

He paused for a moment to let his words echo out through the crowd and he saw them nodding their heads in agreement. “James Ryan is a hero in every sense of the word,” He said quietly, “and though we all will someday fall to dust, his deeds will live on forever. He is immortal.”

Turner bowed his head. “Lords of Kobol, hear our prayer: Take the soul of your son James Ryan into thy hands. Hold him close and welcome him with love and grace into the eternal light that awaits us all.”

“So say we all!” a voice shouted form the back.

Turner looked up and smiled. “So say we all.”



CHAPTER 1

THE EYES OF THE
WORLDS

**STARBOARD HANGAR DECK
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA FLEET STATION, CAPRICA
0700 P.M.S.T.**

Matthew Campagna wrinkled his nose as he stepped off of the Raptor that had brought him to the Battlestar Atlantia, his senses assaulted by the smell of fuel, lubricants and solvents that permeated the air of the busy flight deck.

“Mister Campagna, over here.” A voice called out to him.

He turned to find a young major in a Colonial Fleet uniform standing several paces away waving him over. Blinking his eyes to adjust to the harsh lighting he stepped down of the wing of the Raptor and quickly made his way over to the man who was waiting for him.

“Welcome aboard.” The man said as he offered his hand. “I’m Major West, the Public Affairs Officer for Third Fleet.”

Campagna took the man’s hand and shook it twice before placing it back in his pocket. “Was there a reason I couldn’t take a shuttle up here?”

“Sorry sir, shuttles have more mass and take more fuel to break orbit. It would have been inefficient to use one for a party of three.” West replied.

Campagna nodded. “I guess the new defense budget is tighter than we thought.”

“We have to conserve our resources sir.” West said cheerfully, “After all, we have to be ready to fight at a moment’s notice.”

“Hah.” Campagna laughed. “It’s not like there’s a war on. We haven’t had anything more than a minor skirmish with armed pirates in the last forty years.”

“But you never know. The Cylons are still out there.”

Matt shook his head. “Nobody has seen or heard from the Cylons in forty years, Major. Face it: They’re not coming back. They got out while the getting was good.”

West shrugged. “I assume that this is Mister Romero and Mister Stalport?”

“Yes,” Matt replied, “Mister Romero is my cameraman and Mister Stalport is my Producer.”

“Good,” West said, “If you gentlemen will follow me I’ll show you to your quarters.”

“What about our bags?” Matt asked.

“We’ll have a crewman bring them up as soon as they go through inspection.”

“Inspection?” Matt exclaimed. “Why do they need to be inspected.”

“Sorry sir.” West explained, “Colonial Defense Force regulations state that all items brought on board from a non-military source must be inspected before they will be allowed into the main hull areas. It’s a safety thing.”

Matt rolled his eyes. “Fine, just show me to a room. I’m starving.”



**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA FLEET STATION, CAPRICA
0700 P.M.S.T.**

“Admiral on deck!”

Admiral Robert Nagala returned the salute of the marine who had announced him and made his way to the situation table where his X.O., Commander Lucas, awaited him. Around him the C.I.C. bustled with activity as one shift turned their duties over to the next and the ship made ready to get under way.

“Good morning sir.” Lucas said as he stifled a yawn.

“Morning George.” Nagala replied. “What’s the story?”

“It was a quiet night sir. All of our shore leave parties returned around twenty three hundred last night and all sections report ready to get under way.” The X.O. reported.

Nagala nodded. “Who do I have to promote to get some coffee here?”

Immediately the X.O. had his headset activated. “Galley, send up a crewman with a pot of coffee for the Admiral.”

Nagala smiled. “You really should have a ship of your own George.”

Lucas chuckled. “I *do* have a ship of my own sir. She just happens to be the flagship of the fleet.”

“I guess I’m just a passenger on this ride eh?”

“I wasn’t going to say it...”

Both men shared a laugh as Commander Lucas handed over a sheaf of papers. “Com traffic from the graveyard watch.”

“Anything exciting?” Nagala asked as a yeoman delivered a steaming cup of coffee into his hands.

“Not much.” Lucas replied. “I sent a note with your signature to Bill Adama congratulating him on the retirement of the *Galactica*.”

“Oh frak, that’s today isn’t it?” Nagala said.

“Yes sir, at 1130 hours Picon Military Standard Time. The old warhorse is finally being put out to pasture.”

Nagala shook his head. “It’s kind of sad, George. I remember seeing her fight during the Cylon war. That ship is one tough son of a bitch.”

“So is her commander.” Lucas replied.

“Yes he is.” The Admiral said with a sad note to his voice. “He should have made Admiral a long time ago.”

“What happened?”

“A couple of political blunders. His ex-wife has family in the Admiralty and then there was the *Valkyrie* incident.” Nagala shook his head again. “That’s all it took.”

“Frakin shame if you ask me.” Lucas commented.

“I agree.” Nagala said taking another sip from his coffee cup. “What else is going on?”

“Well sir, today is also Armistice Day so we have, yet again, sent another officer with nothing better to do out to Armistice Station to sit on his ass all day and then come home. According to his transponder he docked at Armistice Station about five minutes ago.”

“I’d be more worried if the Cylons *did* show up.” Nagala chuckled. “Anything else?”

“Yes sir.” Lucas said, adopting a sour expression, “Our guests from Colonial News Network just landed in the port side flight pod. They would like to interview you at our earliest convenience.”

Nagala scowled. “Ratty owes me for this *big time*.” He sighed, “The last thing I need on my ship is a reporter poking around and trying to find anything and everything wrong with our operation.”

“He can try, sir. All he’s going to find is the best damned ship with the best damned crew in the entire fleet.”

Nagala smiled. “So say we all.”

**FLEET ADMIRAL’S CONFERENCE ROOM,
COLONIAL FLEET HEADQUARTERS
ALEXANDRIA CITY, PICON
0700 P.M.S.T**

Richard Torres, Fleet Admiral and Commanding Officer of the Colonial Defense Forces, nodded in greeting as the assembled officers of his staff rose to attention as he walked into the Fleet Command Conference Room. “Good morning gentlemen, please be seated.” He said as he took his seat for his morning briefing.

As everyone sat down he opened the folder in front of him and then poured himself a cup of coffee. “So what’s the good word, Bill?” he said to his Chief of Staff, Commander Bill Thompson.

“Sir, the situation is quiet this morning.” Thompson replied. “The 7th and 15th Fleets are beginning two weeks of exercises in the outskirts of the Caprica system today. Admiral Nagala did an inspection of the planning and preparations and was satisfied with what he saw.”

“Good.” Torres replied as he checked off an entry on his list. “What’s going on elsewhere?”

“Well sir, the Pegasus refit is coming along well. Admiral Cain says that she is pleased with the results so far.” Thompson reported.

Torres chuckled. “And I’ll bet she’s right up their ass every step of the way too.”

Everyone around the table laughed and Torres gestured for Thompson to continue.

“*Galactica* is being retired today. The Secretary of Education is en route now to attend the ceremony. We’re tracking her liner now and will inform you when she arrives.”

Torres nodded. “Good. Now tell me: when is the *Galactica* scheduled to make port for the final time?”

“The *Galactica* will dock at Thermopylae Fleet Station in one standard week.” Thompson replied after consulting his notes.

“Schedule a shuttle for me and inform Commander Adama that I’ll be meeting him there.” Torres ordered.

“Sir, that’s going to conflict with your meeting with the President.” Said the captain who was responsible for his agenda.

“Then notify the President that I’ll have to postpone until the next day.” Torres said, “Bill Adama has faithfully served the colonies for over forty years. The least I can do is be there to send him off.”

“Yes sir.” The captain replied.

“Is that it?”

“The rest is minor housekeeping notes sir.” Commander Thompson said pointing to the Admiral’s folder.

“Very well.” Torres said as he stood. “I’ll be in my office if anything comes up. I have some conference calls with the various fleet commanders starting at zero eight hundred and I’m taking an early lunch today so I can hit the gym.”

“I’ll have the comm. sat set up and ready to go for you sir.” One of the lieutenants said.

“Thank you.” Torres said, “I’ll see you guys tonight at the close of business meeting.”



FLAG SUITE

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Commodore Turner took a powerful pull from his glass of ambrosia and leaned back in his chair to savor the burn as the fiery liquid made its way down his throat. Looking around his desk in front of him he spied the picture of him and Colonel Ryan that he had been staring at when he heard the news of his friend's death.

Feeling the emotion threatening to well up inside him again he raised his glass in silent salute and then reached out and turned the picture face down.

"Damn it." He sighed as he closed his eyes.

BUZZ-BUZZ!

Turner's eyes popped open at the sound of his door buzzer. Setting his glass down he straightened his jacket and leaned forward in his chair. "Enter."

A faint smile crossed his face as Colonel Karla Horvath, his former C.A.G., entered the room and presented a smart salute. "Colonel Horvath, reporting as ordered, sir."

Turner rose and returned the salute then reached out and shook her hand. "Welcome back, Karla."

"I wish it were under better circumstances, sir." She replied.

Turner nodded and gestured to the empty seat across from him. "So do I. Have a seat."

Horvath sat down and pointed towards the half empty bottle. "Don't suppose you have another glass do you?"

Turner chuckled and pulled one from a side table drawer. "A good officer is always prepared."

Silently he poured the amber liquid into her glass and then refreshed his own before replacing the cork.

"To absent friends." Horvath said as she raised her glass in a toast.

"Absent friends." Turner replied tapping the rim of his glass to hers.

Both officers emptied their glass and returned them to the table. A moment of awkward silence followed but was broken by Horvath. "I linked up with Captain Reighney. Looks like she stayed on top of things."

Turner smiled. "She's a good officer."

Horvath arched her eyebrow. "Is there something I should know about?"

“Are you my commander now?” Turner replied with a sheepish grin.

“No, I’m your X.O. and, dare I say your friend, and I want to make sure that my commanding officer isn’t getting himself into a mess.”

“That obvious, huh?” Turner sighed and leaned back in his chair, resigned. “It started right after we got everyone back from the Mars prison.” He said pouring them both another round. “We found ourselves sharing a meal alone in the galley one night after the mid-watch. It just grew from there.”

“I assume that you’re being discrete?” Horvath asked.

Turner fixed her with a frown. “It hasn’t reached that point.”

“Yet.” Horvath added.

Turner looked ready to reply but Horvath cut him off. “You’re human sir, and it gets lonely out here. No one can blame you for finding some companionship.”

“She knows where the line is drawn.” Turner said.

“Good.” Horvath said taking a drink. “I’m still going to have to reassign her though.”

Turner nodded. “I was thinking that myself. Now that she’s flexed her command muscles, I was thinking of reassigning her to the *Sentinel* along with Major Tompkins since he’s taking over as X.O. there again. She’d make a good Ops Officer and that would give her some command time since it would make her the third officer.”

Horvath nodded. “And it would keep her from being under your *direct* command.”

“Agreed. Cut the orders and I’ll sign them.”

“Very good sir.” Horvath said standing up. “I’ll let you tell her yourself tonight.”

“That’s probably not a good idea.” Turner replied.

Horvath smiled. “I’ll make sure that the proper heads are turned just this once.”

Turner chuckled. “You sure?”

“What good X.O.’s are for, sir.” Horvath said. “Now I think I’ll go shake things up in the C.I.C. for a bit.”

Turner raised his glass. “Good hunting, Colonel, and welcome back.”



CHAPTER 2

HOMECOMING

PILOTS READY ROOM BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Ashley Klave and Melody Moody both stood ramrod straight as Commodore Turner approached them. Klave, still sporting the bandages and bruises indicative of the recent attack on her, held her head high as the Commodore approached them and stared them hard in the eyes.

“What am I going to do with you two?” he asked mock seriously.

Klave cast her eyes towards Sheba, who stood at his side. Sheba winked and smirked in return.

“Seems like the only thing I can do to keep you guys in line is promote you.” Turner said with a smile as he turned to Colonel Horvath who stood off to one side. “X.O., post the orders.”

“Attention to orders:” Horvath announced in a loud and clear voice as the assembled pilots snapped to attention, “The President of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol has reposed special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and professional excellence of Ashley Klave and Melody Moody. In recognition of these qualities and their demonstrated command potential, they are hereby discharged from active enlisted service and Commissioned as Officers in the Colonial Defense Forces with the rank of ensign. Signed: Jonathan Turner, Commodore, Commanding.”

Turner smiled as Sheba presented the Ensign’s rank to him. He then turned and pinned the rank to both Klave and then Moody’s collar.

Both of the new officers saluted smartly and Turner returned them with military precision. “Congratulations to you both.”

“And may the Gods have mercy on your soul.” One of the pilots shouted, followed loudly by applause from them all.

Both of the newly minted ensigns turned and shook each other’s hand before embracing. “We did it.” Ashley said excitedly.

“I told you we could.” Moody replied with a smile.

“I couldn’t have done it without you.” Klave said.

Moody smiled. “Funny, I was going to say the same thing to you.”

Both women laughed as Sheba came forward to congratulate them. “You both had me worried for a minute,” she said with a smile, “but when the shit hit the fan you stepped up and did the right thing. I couldn’t be more proud of you.”

“Thank you, sir.” Melody said.

“Yes, thank you- for everything.” Ashley added.

“Just doing my job.” Sheba said as she leaned in close to Ashley’s ear. “And don’t you worry about that *other* matter. I’ve got it covered.”

Ashley nodded. “Thank you.”

Sheba turned to walk away and Ashley placed a gentle hand on her soldier. “And sir?”

“Yeah?”

“Make it *hurt*.”

Sheba smiled and walked away.

FLAG SUITE
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
0825 P.M.S.T.

Matt Campagna took a look through the camera for the tenth time and attempted to adjust his focus. “That light is still too dim Rudy. See if you can bring it up a bit.”

“If I go anymore you’re going to get some glare.” Rudy replied.

“The Admiral is on his way now.” Said Major West as he entered the room. “He had a teleconference with the Fleet Admiral that he had to attend to.”

“No problem.” Said Campagna as he stepped away from the camera and allowed Sampson, his camera man, to take over. “We’re just happy that he could make it.”

“Attention all hands: Prepare for jump. I say again; prepare for jump.” A female voice echoed through the ships intercom.

“Better sit down gentlemen. FTL jumps can be a bit disorienting.” West counseled.

Immediately, all three men took their seats but West remained standing.

“Why aren’t you sitting, Major?” Sampson asked.

“I’ve done this more time than I can count.” West replied with a smile. “It’s the first few hundred, after that you get used to it.”

Campagna smiled and was about to make a comment when a bell sounded three times.

“Here we go again.” West quipped.

Immediately the room felt like it was shrinking and wrapping itself around them all as a tingling sensation made its way up and down Campagna’s spine. Rudy had a grimace on his face and Sampson looked to be in a world of his own as Matt felt the world implode on him. He closed his eyes—

And then it was over.

Matt took a deep breath to regain his bearings and opened his eyes again to find Sampson projecting his breakfast into the nearest waste basket. Looking up at Major West he was shocked to find the man standing rock steady with a smile on his face.

“Admiral on deck!” a marine announced as Admiral Nagala entered the room.

Immediately, Major West came to attention and Matt rose shakily to his feet.

“As you were, Major.” Nagala said as he approached Matt with his hand out. “Mister Campagna, welcome aboard the Atlantia. I apologize for not seeing you sooner but I had command duties to attend to.”

“It’s not a problem, sir.” Campagna replied. “We’re honored to be aboard.”

Nagala nodded and took a seat in front of the camera. “Just so you know, I won’t be able to comment on operational details that might compromise security.”

“We were briefed before our arrival, sir.” Rudy said.

“Good. We can proceed then.”

BASESTAR ALPHA ONE SEVEN

OUTSKIRTS OF THE CAPRICA SYSTEM

0830 P.M.S.T.

The old man looked out the window at the havoc that he had helped bring down upon the human fleets that lay in pieces before him and his smiled with satisfaction knowing that he had done his part to help in this opening gambit against humanity.

“You seem pleased with yourself.” A soft and sultry voice said from behind him.

“You should be too. It only took two Basestars to destroy two entire Colonial Fleets. Our plan is a success.” The old man replied turning to face the Three who stood next to him. “It seems our little sister did her job well.”

“Indeed.” Another deeper voice said as a tall dark skinned man strode into the room. “She reports that all is in readiness.”

“Good.” The old man replied. “This will be a day long remembered by the Cylon: The final annihilation of the life form known as man.”

“God’s will be done.” The Three said.

The old man, known as Cavil among the humans, turned to face the one known as Simon. “Inform all commands: Commence the attack on Caprica.”

**COLONIAL FLEET HEADQUARTERS
ALEXANDRIA CITY, PICON
0835 P.M.S.T.**

Fleet Admiral Richard Torres was finishing up his last bit of paperwork and looking forward to a good workout at the gym when the intercom message that would define the rest of his life came through.

“S.C.C to Fleet Commander.” A gravelly voice said.

This better be good he thought to himself as he activated his comm. set. “This is the Admiral, go ahead.”

“Sir this is Colonel Davidson, duty watch officer. We have a possible issue in the Caprica System. We need you here in Strategic Command.”

Torres arched an eyebrow. “What’s going on?”

“We’ve lost contact with the 7th and 15th Fleets.”

This irritated Torres. It was a minor communications issue, not something he would normally be asked to chime in on. “Send a priority one coded message to Admiral Hall over my signature and inform him to check in with Fleet Command immediately.”

“Sir, Admiral Klaus already had us do that. We didn’t get a response.”

Now Torres began to feel the hair on his neck stand up. Klaus was the Chief of Staff for the Colonial Fleet. "I'm on my way. Tell Admiral Klaus to have a sitrep waiting for me when I arrive."

Standing up, Torres moved to the elevator that would carry him at high speed directly to the Strategic Command Center, or the S.C.C. It only took him a few moments in the express elevator to descend the five hundred meters down underground to where the S.C.C. was located.

When he stepped out the marine guards standing watch snapped to attention and announced "Fleet Admiral on deck!"

Immediately, he was met with salutes as Admiral Klaus and Colonel Davidson presented themselves to him.

"Beg to report sir." Admiral Klaus said.

"Go ahead." Torres said as he folded his arms.

"Sir, at approximately 0830 hours, a partial message was received at Thermopylae Station in the Caprica system from Vice Admiral Eick aboard the Solaria."

"What did it say?" Torres asked impatiently.

"He stated that a large body of unidentified ships had just jumped into dradis range and that he was closing with them to investigate." Admiral Klaus reported, "The message was cut off after that."

"Could it be Admiral Moore's fleet?" Colonel Davidson replied.

"No," Torres replied immediately, "The exercise wasn't due to start until tomorrow morning."

"Maybe Ron decided to get the jump on Dave this time. You know how they are with that rivalry thing they have going." Klaus said.

"Has there been any contact with any of the other ships of the 7th or 15th Fleets?" The Fleet Admiral asked.

"No sir." the Colonel replied, "We lost all communications with the Caprica system at 0831."

Torres shook his head. "I don't like this."

"Could it be a massive transceiver outage?" Colonel Davidson asked.

"No." Torres replied, an icy feeling of dread washing over him. "What other ships do we have in the area?"

“The Battlestar Acropolis is in dock at Thermopylae but most of her crew is down on Caprica on shore leave.” Admiral Klaus reported after looking through his status reports.

“We have no way to contact her anyways. What about Atlantia?” Torres asked.

“They jumped out system a few moments ago. By now they’re halfway to Leonon.” Klaus said.

“I don’t care. Send an Alpha One message to Admiral Nagala. Tell him that, on my orders, he is to return to the Caprica system and investigate.”

“Yes sir.” Colonel Davidson replied as he snapped a salute and moved quickly to comply.

“Klaus, is the secure line to Quorum Tower still operational?”

“No sir. All comms with the Caprica system, including the secure government channels, are out.”

“Damn it.” Torres hissed. “Contact the Secretary of Defense and get him in here. Also, contact Fleet Operations and dispatch a ship to Arelon to pick up the Vice President. Tell them to stand by for a Case Orange scenario.”

“Case Orange?” Klaus asked as he arched an eyebrow. “Isn’t that a bit much, sir?”

“I sure hope it is.” Torres said as he moved past his second in command and picked up an unused headset. “Attention: This is the Fleet Admiral. Moments ago we lost contact with the entire Caprica system. On my authority, I am moving us from Def-Stat Omega to Def-Stat Bravo. Contact your section supervisors and begin alerting stand by personnel.”

Finishing his statement, he set the communications device and turned to face Klaus. “Now we wake up one hundred thousand people and hope like hell this is all a mistake.”



**FLAG SUITE
BATTLESTAR ETERNAL
FIVE JUMPS OUTSIDE CAPRICA
0842 P.M.S.T.**

General John Connors was awakened by the sound of his comm. chiming softly in his ear. Groaning and turning to look at his clock he realized it was 0442 hours C.S.T, Copernicus Standard Time.

I should have waited to switch the clocks back he thought as he blinked away the sleep and reached for his phone handset. “This is the General.”

“Sir, Commander Tajalle here. We just received a coded Alpha One message from Picon.”

This caught Connors attention as he sat up in his bunk. “Go ahead.”

“To all Colonial units: Assume Defense Status Beta, time now.” Tajalle replied.

Connors stroked his stubble filled chin for a moment and then replied. “Very well, set condition two throughout the ship. I’ll be up in a moment.”

“Yes sir.” Tajalle replied closing the line.

Throwing the covers off of him, Connors stood just as the soft chime of the general announcement system sounded. “Attention all hands: Set condition two throughout the ship. I say again, set condition two throughout the ship.”

Moving quickly, Connors pulled on a freshly starched Colonial Marine’s uniform and affixed his general’s rank pins to the collar and finishing his routine by strapping on his polished boots and grabbing an electric razor to clean up his face with on the way to C.I.C.

By the time he arrived a few moments later, his face was smooth and he looked as if he *hadn’t* been awakened in the middle of his sleep cycle.

“Sitrep.” He demanded as he walked in.

“Sir, we’ve contacted Picon and reported our situation to them.” Tajalle replied.

“What did they say?” Connors asked.

“Continue on mission and stand by for further instructions.” The Commander said flatly.

Connors scratched his head and tried to hide his frustration. “So just sit tight and wait huh?”

“That’s about the size of it sir.”

“Did they at least say what the hell is going on?”

Tajalle shook her head. “No sir.”

Connors took a deep breath and reached out and poured himself a cup of coffee. “How long until we jump again?”

“The convoy should be ready to jump within the hour.”

“Well then I am going to my office and finishing my paperwork.” Connors said taking a long drink of the hot liquid he had in his cup. “Might as well since I am up already.”



BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
TWO JUMPS OUTSIDE OF CAPRICA
0843 P.M.S.T.

Admiral Nagala smiled politely as Matt Campagna asked *yet another* question about President Adar designed to elicit a negative response. Chuckling he held up his hand. “Matt, I understand your feelings about the President but you’re not going to goad me into saying anything bad about him. He’s the President and I’m an Admiral. He gives the orders, I salute and move out. End of story.”

“I know but don’t you ever question the-” Matt paused as he searched for the correct word, “the *reasoning* behind those orders? I mean, look at the whole *Prometheus* fiasco! Here we have the most advanced warship in the fleet and he sends it out on a wild goose chase halfway across the galaxy and for what?”

Nagala shook his head. “Commodore Turner and his crew have charted hundreds of planetary systems, many of them with valuable resources that are waiting for us to exploit. I hardly call that a wild goose chase.”

“But what about the reports that the *Prometheus* has encountered other intelligent life forms?” Matt pressed.

“There is no truth to that whatsoever.” Nagala lied.

“So there is no truth that the Battlestar *Prometheus* found another world full of human and non-human life that calls itself the Terran Alliance?”

Nagala’s eyes shot open. “Where did you hear that?” he said, leaning forward in his seat.

Matt smiled smugly and made ready to answer when suddenly the alarms began to blare.

“Action stations! Action stations! Set condition one throughout the ship! This is not a drill. I say again...”

Immediately, Nagala was on his feet and moving to the nearest wall mounted phone.

“Keep rolling.” Matt whispered to Sampson as he pointed towards the Admiral.

“This is the Admiral: Sitrep.” Nagala said.

Matt watched as Nagala listened in silence, nodding his head every so often, a worried expression on his face. “Very well. Spin up the FTL drives and prepare for combat jump.” He said finally before hanging up the phone.

“What’s going on?” Matt said standing up.

Nagala ignored him and instead turned to Major West. “Escort them to their quarters then report to C.I.C.”

“Wait!” Matt protested. “Sir, this is what we want to see!”

“I don’t have time for this.” Nagala said as he turned to leave.

“Admiral!” Matt shouted, causing Nagala to spin angrily towards them.

“Mister Campagna,” the Admiral growled, “this is a real world emergency. I don’t have time to be playing babysitter to you and neither does my crew.”

“Then *don’t*.” Matt replied. “This is what we’re here for sir. We want to tell the story of the Atlantia and her crew and what better way to tell it than to show these brave men and women in action?”

Nagala thought it over for a moment and Matt could see the warring emotions in his expression. Finally Nagala sighed. “Fine, you can come with us but if you get in the way just once—”

“Understood, sir.” Rudy interjected.

“Fine. Follow me.” Nagala said spinning on his heel and marching quickly from the room.

“For the love of the Gods and everything you hold dear, keep that camera rolling no matter what.” Matt said turning to Sampson. “This could be *the* story of the year.”

CHAPTER 3

A DISH BEST SERVED

COLD

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA SYSTEM
0850 P.M.S.T.**

Through the lens of his camera Sampson Romero watched with mixed feelings of fear and awe as the crew of the Battlestar Atlantia went to work. Panning around, he took in the entire C.I.C. as the people there busied themselves with the work at hand.

“Over there.” Matt said pointing to a large and well lit table at the center of the room. Sampson immediately zoomed in and activated the parabolic microphone he had secretly installed on the camera.

“Jump complete.” An officer said from behind Commander Lucas.

“Report all contacts.” Nagala ordered.

“Sir, I’m picking up large field of objects. From the random trajectories I would say its debris.”

“Emergency beacons?” the Admiral asked.

“No sir.” one of the crewmen replied.

“I don’t like this.” Commander Lucas said.

“Me neither.” Nagala replied turning to face the communications station. “Contact Thermopylae station immediately. Have them patch me into the HPG system for direct contact with Picon.”

“Yes sir.” the Chief replied.

Suddenly, Commander Lucas placed his hand to his earpiece and Matt knew that something bad was going down because his face became fixed like stone. “Admiral,” the Commander said, his voice quiet, “Recon raptors just found the black box of the Battlestar Hades.”

“Get it aboard now.” Nagala replied.

“Sir, no response from Thermopylae station on any channel.” The communications chief said.

“Get me a line to Caprica then.” Nagala commanded.

“Sir, I already tried. I’m getting nothing but garbled comms and static from the Caprica standard frequencies.”

“This isn’t right.” Nagala said as he moved to the navigation station. “Navigation: plot an in system jump to Caprica. We’re going to find out what the frak is going on.”



**COLONIAL FLEET HEADQUARTERS
ALEXANDRIA CITY, PICON
0856 P.M.S.T.**

Fleet Admiral Torres watched with calm nerves as the command center around him buzzed with activity. As his eyes glanced at the massive display screens on the walls he took in the situation with the trained eye of a soldier and he knew that things were going wrong.

Fast.

“Bring up the tactical display from Leonis.” He commanded.

Immediately the screen in front of him displayed the Leonis system with her five planets and the ships and stations scattered throughout. “Display grid alpha-two-constellation.”

The screen zoomed in and Torres watched as the icon of the Hercules Battle Group appeared and listed the two Battlestars and three Gunstars that comprised it. “Contact Admiral Layton and

have him jump to grid Beta-seven-gamma. I want him to deploy his ships to screen the main jump points into the Leonis system.”

“Yes sir.”

“Admiral, I have an incoming signal from the *Atlantia* for you. It’s Admiral Nagala.”

Announced Admiral Klaus.

“Put him through here.” Torres said as he activated his headset. “*Atlantia*, this is Colonial Six Actual: SITREP.”

“Colonial Six Actual, this is Atlantia Actual.” Nagala’s static filled voice replied. “The 15th and 7th Fleets have been totally destroyed. No survivors. We’re spinning up our FTL drives to do a recon in force over Caprica but long range scans show at least fifteen unidentified ships in orbit.”

Torres took a deep breath before asking the next question. He already knew what the answer was but he dreaded it nonetheless. “Is it the Cylons?”

The line was silent and for a moment Torres thought he had lost the connection. Then Nagala’s voice returned. “I don’t know sir but I’m going to find out. We’re preparing to jump in sixty seconds. I’ll contact you as soon as we know something. *Atlantia* out.”

“How did they get a signal out of Caprica?” Torres asked as he turned to face Klaus. “I thought comms were down.”

“I don’t know sir.” Klaus replied, “But if what he says is true…”

Suddenly, the display screens began to flicker and wink out one by one, their images dissolving into static.

“What’s going on?” Klaus asked.

“Sir, the main computer network just went down. We’ve lost all our out system data feeds.” Colonel Davidson reported.

“We’re blind.” Torres said. “Something’s going on and I’m not waiting for Nagala to get back to us. Admiral, move the fleet to Defense Status Alpha One.”

“Sir, only the President can authorize that.” Klaus replied.

“In time of war, if the President is unreachable, the Commander of the CDF is authorized to take military action on his behalf that he deems necessary to ensure the safety and security of the Colonies.” Torres said.

“But sir, there *hasn’t been* a declaration of war yet.”

“Look at those screens, Admiral.” Torres said pointing to the static filled screen that had displayed the Caprica system. “*That* is your declaration of war and I willing to wager my retirement that it’s the Cylons.”

“Sir, if this all turns out to be some kind of accident, the President will have your head.”

“If this turns out to be wrong he can *have* it.” Torres replied.

Both men continued to look at each other for a long moment and then Klaus nodded as he picked up his headset. “Operations, set the fleet’s defense status to Alpha One.”

Immediately the alarm klaxons began to buzz as red lights began to flash.

“Do we still have communications?” The Fleet Admiral asked.

“Yes sir, but only on the emergency bands and with no encoding capabilities. We’ll have to broadcast in the clear.” Davidson replied.

“Then send the following message:” Torres said with a heavy heart as he spoke the words that would send his people to war. “To all Colonial Units- Cylon attack underway...”

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ETERNAL
SIX JUMPS OUTSIDE CAPRICA
0910 P.M.S.T.**

Connors re-read the same document from the civilian leader of the colonization effort for the fifth time and scratched his head, still as confused as the first time he read it. Blinking his eyes hard he looked up at Commander Tajalle who was doing her best to hide a grin behind her hand.

“He isn’t serious is he?” Connors asked.

“As a heart attack.” Tajalle replied stifling the laugh she felt welling up in her.

“He wants us to stop the entire convoy for a week to study fungus on a world three jumps off course?”

“Four jumps actually. His ship has a shorter FTL range than the rest of us.” Tajalle said.

“You should have seen him when the telemetry came in from the Raptor mission. He was literally bouncing on his toes like an excited school boy.”

The General shook his head. “Well I hate to disappoint him but we’re not altering course.”

“You’re going to break the poor man’s heart, sir.” Tajalle replied with a smirk.

“Tell him that we’ll schedule a larger recon mission once we get back to—”

“Commander? General? I’m sorry to interrupt but I have a priority message coming in from Picon. It’s being broadcast in the clear.” The Communications crewman suddenly announced.

Connors arched an eyebrow. “In the clear?”

“Yes sir.”

Tajalle arched an eyebrow. “That’s damned peculiar.”

Connors nodded as he kept his eyes focused on the communications crewman. “What does it say?”

The crewman swallowed visibly. “To all Colonial units: Cylon attack underway. Report status and combat readiness to fleet headquarters immediately and stand by for combat assignments.”

Tajalle’s mouth fell open for a brief moment but she snapped it closed quickly before the crew could see. “You have got to be *frakking* kidding me.”

“Request confirmation.” Connors ordered.

“Yes sir.”

“What’s our position right now?” The General asked Tajalle.

Tajalle opened a drawer underneath the situation table and unrolled a star chart. Connors watched as she quickly did the mental calculations and was astonished as she pulled out a pencil and began plotting their position.

“We started on a course heading of two-one-two karem three-four-eight and didn’t deviate except for here,” she pointed to a red circle on the map, “to avoid the Nova Amattagon. Right now we’re six jumps out from Caprica and twelve from the Colony.”

“Sir, I can’t get a confirmation from Fleet H.Q. on the message.”

Connors rubbed his temples as he felt that old sense of danger beginning to crawl up his back. “Until we receive word to the contrary, we assume this is real.”

“Action stations!” Commander Tajalle snapped. “Inform the fleet to go to condition one and circle the wagons.”

Immediately the crew sprang into action as the alarm klaxon began to howl.

“Have all ships begin spinning up their FTL drives and preparing for emergency jump.” Connors commanded, “Navigation: Begin plotting a jump trail back to Caprica.”

“All stations report condition one set.” The Chief of the Boat reported.

“Flight deck reports that Vipers are in the tubes and ready to fly.” Another crewman announced.

“Very well. Get me Doctor Grazier on the line.” Connors said.

“Alert!” the operations officer shouted. “New dradis contacts bearing zero-eight-five karem zero-four-four!”

“Identify!” Tajalle and Connors said at the same time.

“Don’t know sir.” the lieutenant sitting in operations replied. “War book doesn’t have any identification on them.”

“How many and how close?” Tajalle said as she stepped into her role as the fleet tactical commander.

“I have one capital class contact and a screen of twelve fighters. Range is five thousand, C.B.D.R.”

“Coming in fast and hard.” Tajalle said, “Time to contact?”

“One minute”

Tajalle looked to Connors who nodded his approval. “The fleet is yours Commander.” He said.

“Very good sir.” Tajalle said as she went into action. “Inform the civilian captains to execute emergency jump. Launch all Vipers and have the *Andromeda* move up to cover our portside flank.”

“Vipers are away and closing on enemy fighters. Time to intercept is thirty seconds.”

Connors watched intently as the Vipers closed on the enemy fighters and then something happened that he would have never expected.

“Sir, we just lost contact with the Vipers.”

“How many?” Connors asked.

“All of them.”

“Oh my gods, look.” The chief of the boat gasped.

“They’re going straight in. No maneuvering, no *nothing*.”

Connors watched with an icy feeling of fear and dread in his heart as the icons that represented three hundred young Viper pilots all winked out in a single deadly heartbeat.

“Commander, we’re in deep shit here.”

“Yes sir.” Tajalle agreed. “Navigation, prepare to execute emergency jump.”

“But sir! We can’t leave our pilots to die out there!” the navigation officer protested.

“They’re already dead lieutenant.” Connors snapped. “Nobody punched out, their systems were disabled. Now get us out of here before—”

“Radiological alarm!”

“Oh frak!” the ops officer exclaimed. “Multiple inbound nukes!”

“How many?” Connors asked.

“Too many.” Tajalle replied as she studied the dradis screen.

“The *Andromeda* is moving to intercept!”

“What?” Connors asked as he spun towards operations.

Directly in front of the *Eternal*, the *Andromeda* cruised into a position that placed her into the line of fire of the approaching nukes. Then she fired her point defense guns, lighting up the sky around her like a nova.

“Sir! The *Andromeda* took out the nukes!” the operations lieutenant shouted with joy.

“Bandits still approaching sir. What are your orders?” Tajalle asked.

“Emergency jump. Let’s get the hell out of here.” Connors replied.

“FTL systems online sir. Thirty seconds for the navi-computer.”

“Sir, the enemy is broadcasting a signal at us.” Tajalle said.

Suddenly, all of the computer screens began to flicker and the power systems began to fade.

Connors looked around in horror, realizing that his ship was about to be disabled but before he could say anything Commander Tajalle sprang into action.

“Hit the emergency disconnect on the network hub!” she commanded. “Communications: shut down the wireless transceivers now!”

“What the frak is going on Commander?” Connors demanded.

“It’s the Cylons! They’re hacking all our systems!” she said as she spun to operations, “All stations go to manual controls *now!*”

The crew moved like energy itself as they shot around and switched over all of the systems normally monitored by the ships computers, to manual. It took a few moments but slowly the ship came back to life.

“Dradis is back Commander.” The Chief of the Boat said. “We have an inbound Cylon Basestar, closing rapidly.”

“What about the *Andromeda*?” Connors asked.

“Spotters report seeing no lights and that she isn’t maneuvering.” The Chief replied after consulting with his radio.

“Radiological alarm! The Cylons are firing nukes again!”

“FTL status?” Connors asked.

“Ten seconds.” The Ops officer replied.

“Time to impact?”

“Twelve seconds.” Tajalle said, “A photo finish.”

“Sir, the Gunstars are requesting instructions.”

“Tell them to jump to the Civilian Fleet and escort them home immediately.” Connors ordered.

“What about the *Andromeda*?” Tajalle asked quietly.

Connors shook his head. “There’s nothing we can do for them. If we stay, we die too and Commander Fletcher knows it.”

The Commander nodded, knowing that the General was right.

“FTL ready sir!” the Chief announced.

Tajalle swallowed hard. “Jump.”

The Battlestar *Eternal* disappeared in a flash of light as the Cylon nuclear weapons slammed into the *Andromeda*’s bow. At first it seems as if the war ship would be able to take the damage but a second hit dispelled that notion as great tears opened along the seams of the hull plates as the entire front of the ship seemed to be crushed back like a beer can.

Then the third nuke hit and split the front end of the Battlestar apart like a ripened fruit. Glowing pieces of rapidly cooling hull plating flew across space followed by bodies, whole and sundered, that tumbled out into the icy vacuum of space.

It only took a second longer though until the shock wave reached the fusion drive core of the great machine and turned its reaction, normally controlled so precisely, into a violent and roiling wave of energy that tore apart the rest of the ship in mere instants.

Only thirty second after the *Eternal* had jumped to safety Cylon Raiders flew through the scattered debris of the once proud ship like flies feasting on the carcass of a dead lion.

This would be humanity’s legacy: an unmerciful enemy with ruthless drive and the ruins of a once proud people.

This is how the darkness falls...



COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Turner examined the star charts on the table in front of him closely and tried not to let the excitement building in the officers around him infect him too much. “So this is it?” he asked, turning to Dr. Zylman.

“Yes sir.” The Doctor replied somberly. “These are the last two steps to Earth.”

“Tell me about this system.” Turner said pointing to the chart.

“Recon says it’s a trinary star system, sir.” Colonel Horvath explained. “The two binary stars that orbit each other are main sequence stars of the G and K class. The third one is a red dwarf in the UV class and is so far out that we don’t know if it’s even normally part of the system. It could be a rouge star that’s getting pulled in by the larger two.”

“What about planets?” Turner asked.

“We can’t tell from this distance.” Slider replied. “There is too much EM interference from the binary stars to really get a good scan. However, I can have a Raptor mission prepped and ready within the hour if you give the word.”

Turner nodded. “The word is given Major. Send a recon in force and let me know what they find.”

“Yes sir.” Slider replied with a smile as he dashed off to the flight deck.

“Sir, may I ask a question?” Dr. Zylman asked.

“Go ahead.”

“The Earth star system is well within our jump range. Why not just jump directly there?”

Turner smiled. “Doctor, if you were the leader of Earth and suddenly three warships jumped into orbit without announcing themselves, what would be *your* first reaction?”

“I see your point.” Zylman chuckled momentarily before taking on a more somber tone. “By the way sir, I know we haven’t spoken much since the memorial service but I wanted to say that I think James would have been honored by what you said.”

“I know that you and the Colonel were,” Turner paused as he searched for the right words, “*good friends*. I think he died happy knowing that you were safe.”

Zylman smiled. “I hope so.”

Both men stood quietly for a moment contemplating their lost friend but Turner was the first to walk away.

“Colonel,” Turner said as he walked to the doorway, “You have the deck. I’m going to my quarters for a meeting.”

“Yes sir.” Horvath replied.

Turner exited the C.I.C. and Horvath heard a couple of snickers from the crew pit. “Something funny down there?” she asked.

“No sir.” one crewman replied with a sly smile. “We’re just happy that the old man is getting some *relaxation time*.”

“Yeah,” another crewman added, “maybe he’ll lighten up on us now that—”

“*Lock that shit up*.” Horvath snarled. “That’s your commanding officer that you’re talking about, *not* your buddy.”

“Yes sir!” the crewmen replied snapping to attention.

“Chief!” Horvath called out and in an instant, Master Chief Madrid was at her side.

“What can I do for you X.O.?” Maddie asked.

“These two crewmen are done for the day. I think they need some remedial training on how to keep their frakkin mouths shut.”

Maddie smiled and it sent chills down the spine of the indicted crewmen. “I think I know just the thing.”



CHAPTER 4

THE FIRES OF PERDITION

Many have wondered what triggered the Cylon attack. Was it something the humans did to provoke their children? Was it revenge for the war that they had been unable to win four decades earlier? The truth is far darker than anything anyone imagined.

The Cylons had judged humanity long ago, indeed even before the first war had begun, and found them to be lacking. The Cylons had found humanity to be a selfishly flawed species with no desire or hope for redemption.

And so the war had begun and it raged for years until the Cylons realized that it could not be won. So they signed an armistice and withdrew to bide their time. They evolved and learned; they massed their forces and developed new machines and methods of death.

And they watched.

They observed from both within and without as humanity went on. Everyday their judgment confirmed by the actions of those they called their parents. Then came the day when the admiralty decided to provoke the Cylons by sending a ship across the armistice line.

This was all that the Cylons needed to confirm what they had always thought: Eventually, humanity would come back to finish the job it had started.

And thus the decision had been made. They had been patient long enough. It was, at last, time to come home...

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA SYSTEM
0930 P.M.S.T.**

The Battlestar Atlantia flashed into appearance over the southern continent of Caprica and Admiral Nagala had to fight his impatience as he turned to his operations officer.

“Report.”

“Jump complete, all decks report condition one set.” The lieutenant at the station answered.

“Report all contacts.” Colonel Lucas commanded.

“No contacts on dradis.”

“Wireless?” Nagala asked, his arms folded across his chest.

The lieutenant shook his head, a grim expression on his face.

Nagala took a deep breath. “Activate the cameras on observation posts one, three and five. Focus on Caprica City.”

The lieutenant nodded and activated the cameras as instructed. “I’m getting a pic—oh my gods.”

The Admiral’s eyes were immediately drawn to the lieutenants’ screen. “Put it up on the main screen.”

The lieutenant, his face still frozen in horror, continued to stare at the screen.

“Lieutenant!” Colonel Lucas shouted, snapping the young lieutenant back to reality.

Quickly the officer flipped the switch that put the image on the main screen and Nagala immediately knew why the lieutenant had been so transfixed.

The image of Caprica, normally a white and blue marble, looked like a dust cloud as fires blossomed in various places across the surface of the planet and where Caprica City had once been, now there was only a mushroom cloud dissipating in the atmosphere.

Suddenly, as they stood staring at the image of Caprica in its death throes, the dradis alarm began to blare. “Contact!” the lieutenant at operations announced.

“Where?”

“One, two- now *three* capital class bogeys just jumped into Caprica orbit!”

“Bogey’s my ass! Those are *Bandits!*” Lucas drawled.

“LAUNCH ALERT!” a crewman announced loudly from his console. “I have seven incoming nuclear warheads sir!”

The C.I.C. burst into activity and noise as crewmen began to panic at their posts. Matt, Sampson and Rudy watched with a growing sense of dread as it seemed the crew was falling apart in front of them.

Then, out of the din of noise and confusion, Admiral Nagala’s voice boomed loudly.

“Quiet down.” He said calmly over the loud speakers. Immediately, the C.I.C. went quiet as all eyes turned to their admiral. “Now is not the time for panic people. We panic, we die.”

“Are you getting this?” Matt asked quietly.

“Every word.” Sampson whispered.

“Stand to your posts and remain calm and we’ll be alright.” The Admiral concluded before turning to the weapons officer. “All batteries: commence defensive fire.”

“Defensive fire, aye sir.” the woman replied turning to her subordinates to relay the message.

“Commander, spin up the FTL drives and prepare for emergency jump.”

“Spin up the FTL, aye sir.”

“Time to impact?” Nagala asked, turning to the operations lieutenant.

“Impact in fifty eight seconds sir.”

“Very well. Damage control crews: preposition for deployment. Medical teams, stand by for casualties.”

Matt shook his head in amazement. Here in front of him was a man who had over two thousand people under his command, in the middle of a combat situation where life and death hung in the balance, yet the Admiral didn’t even have a bead of sweat on his brow. His breathing was regular and his eyes were clear and bright, like he was on a weekend stroll in the park.

“That’s a *leader.*” He said quietly.

Sampson and Rudy both nodded their heads in agreement.

“What’s that?” Rudy asked as he pointed to a blue light flashing on a panel.

Nagala turned to see the blue light flashing and immediately pointed to the panel. “Activate the V.I. defense system.”

“What’s the V.I. defense system?” Matt asked turning to the Major who stood near them.

“V.I. stands for Virtual Intelligence.” The Major explained. “It’s a learning computer that is capable of reacting and adapting to situations as they chances within milliseconds.”

“Doesn’t that violate Colonial law on A.I.?” Matt asked.

“No. The computer is automated but not sentient. It isn’t self aware and has even been programmed to keep itself from *becoming* self aware.”

“V.I. is online and defending against the Cylon code.” The ops lieutenant reported.

Nagala nodded. “Time to impact?”

“Ten seconds.”

The Admiral activated his headset. “All hands: brace for contact.”

The ship shuddered as the missiles began running into the defensive fire barrier that had blossomed around the *Atlantia*.

“We got all but one sir.” Colonel Lucas reported with a grim note to his voice.

Nagala pursed his lips. “Hold on.”

Suddenly the ship heaved as if a hand of one of the gods had picked it up and tossed it aside like a child’s toy. All over the C.I.C. crewmembers went flying as the gravity plating momentarily gave out under their feet only to return a moment later and bring everyone crashing back down hard.

As Admiral Nagala blinked his eyes he looked around and took stock of his situation. He had managed to remain in place with a death grip on the situation table but Commander Lucas hadn’t been that lucky. He now lay crumpled in a corner and from the angle of his head, Nagala knew his friend was gone.

Turning away and blinking the tears from his eyes the Admiral focused on what was important: his ship and his crew. “Damage report.”

“Direct hit on the port quarter sir. Three inner hull breaches forward of frame seventeen on decks twelve, thirteen and fourteen.” The chief engineer replied.

“Casualty reports coming in from all over the ship, sir” The ops lieutenant said. “So far we have twenty one dead, and ninety one wounded.”

“Systems check.”

“All systems in the green sir. FTL is spun up and ready.”

“Then let’s get the hell out of here before they realize we didn’t die.”

“But sir, where are we jumping to?” a voice asked.

“Virgon.” Nagala replied. “It’s the fleet fallback position. We need time to get our bearings and figure out what the hell is going on.”



**COLONIAL FLEET HEADQUARTERS
ALEXANDRIA CITY, PICON
0940 P.M.S.T**

“All fleet units confirming receipt of transmission sir.” Colonel Davidson reported.

Fleet Admiral Torres nodded as he continued to study the display screens arrayed around him. “Any word from Nagala yet?”

“Yes sir. He’s just jumped into the Virgon system and is taking charge of the forces gathered there.” Davidson replied.

“What does he have there?”

“Twenty Battlestars, thirty two Gunstars and several fleet support craft.”

“What have we lost so far?”

Davidson shook his head sadly. “Sir, we’ve lost over forty Battlestars, thirty seven Gunstars, sixty six, Scoutstars and over one thousand fighters.”

“We’re getting our asses kicked here.” Torres said as he rubbed his eyes. “At least we have our systems back up for the moment. Any word on the President?”

Davidson snorted. “You mean after his plea for mercy and offer to surrender? No.”

“Sir! New dradis contacts in system!” a voice shouted.

“What is it?” Torres demanded.

“I have twelve Cylon Basestars on my scope sir! They just jumped in on top of—”

Suddenly the room burst into static and chaos began to erupt as the men and women in the command center began to realize that they were now in death’s sights.

“They’re launching Raiders!” one voice shouted only to be outdone by another. “Our system is being hacked!”

“Go to analog backups.” Colonel Davidson ordered as he turned to face Torres. “Sir, it’s time for you to evacuate.”

The Fleet Admiral shook his head. “Get Nagala on the line.”

“We don’t have coding capabilities sir..”

“We’ll have to make do.”

Davidson nodded and moved to activate the backup system. “I have Admiral Nagala sir but you better make it quick.”

“What’s wrong?”

“We’ve lost contact with the Bellerphon battle group.”

“What about planetary defenses?”

“They’ve begun to target the Cylons but the enemy has already started to launch missiles at the planet.”

“Nukes?”

Davidson nodded.

“Time till impact?”

“Just under ten minutes sir.”

“Alright then, we have a lot of work and only a few minutes to do it.” Torres said as he picked up his headset and put it to his ear. “Attention all hands: Begin packaging your data for a final burst to the *Atlantia* and then get to the shelters.”



**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA SYSTEM
0950 P.M.S.T.**

The C.I.C. was deathly silent as Matt Campagna watched with fear and sadness in his heart as Admiral Nagala listened to his old friend, Fleet Admiral Torres, speak through the

loudspeakers with confidence and military precision, even knowing that his death was only minutes away for him.

“So you’ve got the latest updates on force disposition?” Torres asked.

“Yes sir.” Nagala replied. “I’m massing what’s left of our forces at Virgon and Leonis, but it isn’t much.”

“Make sure you pass the word to disable the command networks. It looks like the Cylons have found a backdoor into the systems and they’re shutting down our ships before they can even fire a shot.”

“We’re sending the message now sir”

“What about the Vice President and the cabinet?”

“The only ones we’ve been able to confirm alive is the Secretary of State on Aquarion and the Secretary of Education who was out attending the *Galactica*’s retirement.”

“Where is Adama now?”

“He’s plotting a jump to Ragnar Anchorage to re-arm. He has orders to join us here once he’s done.”

“Good.” Torres replied. “What word have you received from the colonies themselves?”

Nagala sighed sadly. “Caprica is completely gone along with Sagitaron, Tauron and Cancera. We’ve lost contact with all the rest except for Virgon, Leonis and-- you.”

“You won’t have us for long. Based on our calculations, we have two minutes until we’re hit.”

“You better get to the shelter then.”

Torres chuckled. “Sorry Rob, it won’t do any good. We have seven nukes at five minute intervals targeted just on this location. Even the shelters can’t take that. The Cylons knew how to kill us.”

Nagala pounded his fist into the situation table. “Gods damn it.”

“No time for that now, Rob. You can deal with the dead later.”

“Well, I’ve done all I can here.” Torres said after a moment of silence. “I’m transferring fleet command over to you.”

Nagala swallowed hard. “Understood sir. I’ll make you proud.”

“I know you will.” Torres replied. “Oh, and Rob?”

“Yeah Ratty?” Nagala responded, his voice barely a whisper.

“Good hunting.”

And then the line dissolved into static.

The room continued to remain silent as everyone said a quiet prayer for the souls that had just been lost. Then Admiral Nagala rose back to his full height, a fire in his eyes.

“Send the following to all units.”

“Go ahead, sir.”

“Attention all Colonial units: Picon Fleet Headquarters has been destroyed. As of now, zero nine five three hours, I am assuming command of the fleet. All standing orders remain in effect. Robert Nagala, Fleet Admiral, Commanding.”

“Sent sir.” the operations lieutenant replied.

“Good.” Nagala replied as he turned to face his crew. “Mourn the dead later, people. We have a fight coming here and soon and I want us ready.”

“But sir, we’re outnumbered ten to one.” One of the junior officers said. “Shouldn’t we at least be *discussing* the option of surrender?”

Nagala shook his head. “There is no surrender, ensign because this isn’t about conquest. If they wanted our surrender, they could have had it an hour ago when the President offered it unconditionally. No people, this is nothing less than *genocide* and if we lose this fight that’s coming here, not only do we die, but humanity dies with us.”

Nagala observed the C.I.C. to make sure his message had sunk in and then clapped his hands. “So we will fight and make our stand here and if it’s necessary then we will *die* here but if we must die, if *we* must die, then we’re going to make *damn* sure that *our* names will go down in history.”

“We’ll make those frakkin Cylons remember our name sir!” one crewman called out.

“Damn right we will.” Nagala replied. “Just remember: What we do in life echoes an eternity so make sure that you’ll be proud of what you do today.”

“So say we all!” a Marine shouted.

“So say we all!” Another chimed in, followed by another. Soon the chant of “So say we all!” had begun to echo through the decks of the *Atlantia* and Matt found himself chanting along with them.

FLAG SUITE

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

Captain Reighney entered quietly and made her way towards the living area of the flag suite where Commodore Turner awaited her. Standing as she entered he smiled and gestured for her to take a seat next to him.

“I have got to get my own Battlestar one day.” Reighney said as she looked around. “I still can’t get over how good you have it here.”

“It took a long time.” Turner said as he pulled two champagne flutes from under the desk and followed by a bottle of Arelon Reserve.

“Champagne.” Reighney commented with a cocked eyebrow and a suspicious expression. “What’s the occasion? You’re not try to get me drunk so you can sleep with me are you?”

Turner grinned impishly. “Maybe.”

He poured two glasses and then raised his own in a toast. “The truth is, tonight is special for you.”

“How so?” Reighney asked as she took her own flute in hand.

“It’s your promotion night.”

Now Reighney was confused. “Promotion?”

“Yes.” Turner smiled as he tapped his glass against hers. “You are now the new operations officer of the Gunstar Sentinel.

Reighney was silent for a long moment as she sipped her champagne but Turner instantly knew that this news wasn’t happy for her. He waited, however, for her to speak and when she finally did it was with pain in her voice. “Why are you sending me away?”

Turner’s eyes went wide with surprise. “I- I’m not sending you away. I’m giving you a better job.”

“I liked the job I had *here*.” Reighney replied.

“I know but—”

“Did I do something wrong?”

“Gods, no!” Turner said reaching out to her. “It’s just that—”

“Just what?” Reighney asked.

“It’s just that if we’re going to continue this relationship I can’t have you under my direct command.”

Reighney went silent again but after a moment she reached out to Turner and took his hand. “I don’t— know what to say to that. I *thought* that we agreed to keep it to just friendship for now.”

Turner nodded. “I know we said that, but what’s *said* and what *is* are two different things and the truth *is* I’ve kind of grown fond of you and I would like to continue this relationship and see where it goes.”

“But?” Reighney prodded.

Turner sighed. “People have begun to notice and they remember how hard I cracked down on the issue of superiors having relationships with their direct subordinates. I have to set the example, *especially* since we’re so far from home, and I can’t do that if I’m having a relationship with one of my command staff.”

Reighney nodded. “I understand.”

Turner pulled her closer and looked deep into her eyes. “Do you? Do you understand that I’m—”

Reighney silenced him with a deep and passionate kiss and the message was simple. She understood.

CHAPTER 5

AS DARKNESS FALLS

Fleet Admiral Nathan Gastineau, one of the greatest military strategists in colonial history was once quoted as saying “An ambush is the art of making your enemy go to where you want him to die and then pulling the trigger before he realizes that he’s been played.” The Cylons, ever the students of history, took these words to heart when they constructed their plans. They knew that if they were successful in taking down the Colonial Defense Network, it would only be a matter of time before the rest of the fleet caught on and made the necessary adjustments.

Of course, the Cylons also had copies of Colonial contingency plans and knew exactly where the fleet would fall back to and launch their counteroffensive from: Virgon. With this in mind they crafted their trap with meticulous care. First, they took out the outlying Colonies and the ships guarding those systems. Then they destroyed both the center of the civilian government and the military command hub. From there they isolated and destroyed other key installations, other fleets and ships working quickly and methodically until finally, there were only a handful of warships remaining and only one place left to go.

*It was the place where humanity would make its last stand—
And it was right where the Cylons wanted them.*

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
CAPRICA SYSTEM
1050 P.M.S.T.**

Matthew Campagna shook his head in disbelief as he stared at the pictures being displayed on screens around the *Atlantia* C.I.C. They reflected the true horror being visited on them by the Cylons and for once, he found himself at a complete and total loss for words.

“Oh my gods, is that—” Sampson breathed from beside him.

“It’s the Bellerphon. She burned in over Alexandria City after the Cylons disabled her in low orbit.” Nagala commented silently. “She broke in two about half way through Picon’s ionosphere. Her bow crashed into the Olympus Mountain Range while her engine section landed about eighty miles away in the town of Thebes.”

“How many people were aboard?” Rudy asked.

“The Bellerphon had a crew of two thousand.”

“Sir, Governor Shraplen is radioing from the surface. He says all of the escape vehicles are ready to launch.” The Ops lieutenant reported.

“Tell him to launch and make for the rendezvous point at once.”

“Aye sir.”

“Dradis contact!”

Nagala spun towards the dradis display. “Where?”

“I have three, no four- wait—oh my gods!”

“What the frak! How many Basestars are there, Lieutenant?” Nagala demanded as he spun back on the hapless officer.

“Sir, I think *all* of them.”

Nagala turned back to the dradis screen and his eyes went wide with horror as he realized that the lieutenant had been right.

“Wide band *now*.” The Admiral ordered as he activated his head set.

“Wide band sir.”

“Attention Colonial units: Cylon forces have jumped into the system. Disengage all computer networks and stand by to engage the enemy.” The Admiral paused, looking around the C.I.C. at the terrified yet determined young faces that surrounded him, all looking to him for inspiration. “The enemy outnumbers us by at least two to one and Admiral Layton’s task force at Leonis has been destroyed so any hope of relief is gone. In short, I believe that we are the last hope for the people below us.”

“Now I have never lied to you before and I won’t start today. I don’t think we can win this fight that is coming, but winning isn’t the objective. We have to hold the Cylons long enough for the escape vehicles from Virgon to make their jumps. Once they have jumped away we will attempt to make a fighting withdrawal.”

“I know you all are scared. Truth be told, I am too, but these bastards have come here and attacked us without provocation. They have destroyed our homes and our families without mercy. They started this war and it might end here with us but if we do our jobs today, the human legacy will live on and *that* is what we’re fighting for. Good hunting! *Atlantia* Actual, out.”

Nagala turned back to his Ops officer without preamble. “To all ships: Launch all Vipers and move out at half speed.”

“All ships complying, sir.”

Nagala nodded, his upper lip curled into a snarl. “Time to make these sons of bitches *pay*.”



**ENLISTED CREW QUARTERS,
DECK 21, SECTION E- 17
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS**

It wasn’t easy for Splashdown to be patient. She had waited for this moment for weeks since it had happened. Outwardly, nothing was wrong. She was back to being her cheerful self, delighted to be wearing an ensign’s rank and a pilot’s wings. Inside though, she was a roiling storm of hatred and loathing.

Next to her, on one of the bunk’s, Crewman First Class Hett lay writhing in pain, his crotch bleeding profusely thought closed hands that tired to keep the blood in. “Oh you frakking bitch! I swear I’ll kill you! Oh gods!!” he screamed.

She paid him no mind. He had paid the price for his actions and soon she would turn her weapon on herself to pay the price for her vengeance. She just wanted to wait until Sheba showed up so that she could explain herself to the officer who had placed so much trust in her. She wanted to explain that she had tried to wait for justice to be done but the screaming in her

head *wouldn't stop!* The visions of his drunken and lustful smile as he violated her body and soul haunted her dreams and laughed at her from the back of her mind during her waking hours. It was driving her mad and she knew of only one way to make the voices quit.

But first, she needed *justice!*

It had been only two minutes since she had called but it seemed an eternity to her before the door locks clicked open to admit the blonde woman whom she looked up to so much.

Sheba cast her eyes about and immediately knew what had happened. Splashdown sat on the table in the center of the bunkroom, her eyes half open, tears running down her cheeks, her hair disheveled and a standard issue pistol in her hands.

On his bunk next to her was crewman Hett, his writhing was slowing now and his pale hands no longer tried to stop the profuse bleeding from his crotch area.

Acting quickly, Sheba picked up the handset phone. "Medical emergency! Get a trauma team to enlisted crew quarters, deck twenty one section echo seventeen *now!*"

Receiving a response, Sheba hung the handset up and moved towards Splashdown.

"Don't come any closer sir." Splashdown said, her voice oddly distant.

"Ashley, I need to treat his wound." Sheba replied.

"No." Splashdown snarled as she slowly lifted her eyes. "You know what that son of a bitch did to me. Let him *die.*"

"Ashley, we can't do that." Sheba said, cautiously inching closer.

"Why not?"

"Because it's wrong."

Splashdown suddenly sprang to her feet. "*What he did to me was wrong!*" she screamed hoarsely.

Sheba stood her ground, her eyes never leaving the gun in Ashley's hands. "I know it was, Ash, but you can't allow yourself to—"

"To what? To be suckered in by some knuckle dragger who couldn't spell his own name if you spotted him two of the letters? To allow myself to regret ever walking into that room? To—"

Splashdown collapsed to her knees as racking sobs overcame her. Immediately, Sheba was on her holding her close and moving the gun out of her hand and into her own.

Behind them, medics rushed in and found Hett, now unconscious, on his bunk and immediately began ripping away his clothing to expose the wound.

“Good gods, what the hell happened?” the nurse asked.

“Just get him to the infirmary.” Sheba snapped.

The nurse nodded and placed gauze on his wound but not before Sheba caught sight of the horrendous damage Ashley had done with her well placed shot.

“He deserves to die.” Ashley quietly sobbed into Sheba’s shoulder.

“No,” Sheba replied quietly as she stroked the young ensign’s hair. “He got exactly what he deserved.”

It was a long time until the sobbing stopped but when it did, the voices in her head were mercifully silent.

FLAG SUITE

BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

“An accidental discharge?” Colonel Horvath fixed Sheba with a withering glare as Commodore Turner observed from behind his desk. “You don’t possibly expect me to believe that load of feldergarb?” she said.

“No sir.” Sheba replied, “But I expect you understand *why* I’m saying it.”

“No one is saying that we don’t understand why, Captain,” Turner said as he steepled his fingertips. “but we can’t just let this go. We have a crewman in the hospital who barely survived surgery to reconstruct his genitals.”

“He’s lucky to be alive at all.” Sheba replied.

“That’s enough *captain*.” Horvath snapped.

Sheba assumed the position of attention but she was confident that everyone in the room knew she was right. “I realize that something has to be done sir and as a flag officer on detached duty it is within your authority to try her case. However, I think justice has been served here. She’s a good stick but she’s going to need some down time and emotional counseling after this. I think forty five days in the brig for accidental discharge and negligent injury to a crewman might be just enough time to get her back on track.”

Horvath looked at Turner and nodded. “I can live with that.”

“So can I.” Turner replied. “But after she gets out she is not allowed to go anywhere near the enlisted barracks unless it is official business. Understood?”

“Yes sir.” Sheba replied.

“What about crewman Hett?” Horvath asked.

“Doctor Kaplan says he may not ever be fully functional again and he had to have one of his testicles removed due to the damage. Like Sheba said, I think justice has been served here.”

Both women nodded as the comm. panel by his desk buzzed. “C.I.C. for commanding officer.”

“Go ahead.” Turner responded as he activated the speaker.

“Sir, the recon Raptor has just landed. Major Allen is one his way up with the photos.” The voice of Allain Halloran replied.

Turner looked up and smiled. “I’m on my way.”



**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ATLANTIA
IN ORBIT OF VIRGON**

The Battlestar Atlantia rocked as another nuclear warhead detonated against her hull and Admiral Nagala held tight in effort not to be thrown across the C.I.C.

“Direct hit against the port flight pod!” the chief engineer, his face bloody and cut, announced. “Multiple breaches along the forward section. We’re venting atmosphere.”

“Sir! The Gunstar *Guardian* just bought it!” the Ops lieutenant shouted.

“Have the Gunstar *Kanji* move forward and plug the hole in our line!” Nagala replied as he turned to the weapons officer. “What’s our weapons status?”

“We’ve lost five of our main guns sir. Missile silos are empty and our point defenses are at twenty five percent.” The weapons officer replied gravely.

“What about fighters?” Nagala pressed.

“We’ve lost all but Red squadron and there are only ten of them left sir.” another voice answered.

Nagala shook his head and looked directly at Matt. “Looks like you guys got front row seats to the end of the world.” He said as he turned and grabbed a young female crewman. “Take these men down to the starboard flight pod. There’s a rescue Raptor waiting for them. Make sure they get aboard.”

“Yes sir.” the crewman replied running to where Matt, Rudy and Sampson stood. “Follow me!”

Matt locked eyes with the admiral who nodded slowly. “Go, you don’t have much time.”

“Cylons have docked at the starboard loading port sir! We’re being boarded!”

“C’mon Matt! We have to go!” Rudy said as he grabbed Matt by the arm and dragged him away.”

Nagala watched as Campagna and his film crew left the C.I.C. and then turned to the Ops lieutenant. “Fire up the fast response teams. Contain the incursion.”

Just then the deck heaved under Nagala and he found himself flying through the air along with others. When he slammed back down after what felt like endless moments in the air, he felt his right forearm splinter and shatter under the stress. Blinding pain wracked his body as he desperately fought for breath and it took him a long moment to regain his bearings.

Struggling to stand he stumbled back to the situation table to find it covered in the blood of a young ensign who had been manning the helm only moments before.

Looking around he saw smoke and sparks everywhere and alarms were screaming at him from all directions as well as people who staggered about as if in a daze.

“The Battlestar Pacifica just exploded beneath us, sir.” the Ops lieutenant gasped out. “We’ve—taken heavy damage along our under—side.”

Nagala looked to find the young man standing at his side, half of his face a burned and bleeding wreck from his screen exploding in his face. “Ok son, just rest here.” Nagala said as he used his left arm to lower the young man to the floor.

“Sir, I can’t—see.”

Nagala nodded as he fought back tears. “I know.”

“Request- permission to- leave my station—sir.”

“Go ahead son. You’re relieved.” Nagala said quietly.

The young lieutenant closed his remaining eye and slumped down and the Admiral knew he was gone.

Taking a deep and steadying breath, Nagala stood and made his way back to the communications station where a panicked young man who Nagala swore could be no more than eighteen, frantically tried to maintain his post. "Crewman, sound the general alert: All hands abandon ship."

"Y-y-yes sir." the boy replied.

Nagala turned back to his own station at the situation table and used his left hand to activate the keypad to his personal cryptograph. *One last message to send.* He thought to himself.

And he began typing...

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ETERNAL
RALLY POINT ALPHA**

General John Connors Continued to stare at the printout in his hands long after he finished reading it. His hands trembled and the paper shook ever so slightly as sadness, rage and a host of other emotions threatened to overwhelm him but years of training helped him as he kept his cool in front of the crew.

"What is it?" Commander Tajalle asked from beside him.

"It's our final orders." Connors replied heavily as he handed the document to her.

Tajalle covered set her mouth in a grim line as she read.

**T0: Gen. John Connors, Commander Copernicus Colony Project
From: FADM Robert Nagala**

John, the Cylons have surrounded us here and there isn't much time. We got as many people off of Virgon as possible but Cylons may be among them. The C.D.N. was compromised and I am positive there was a an infiltrator or worse involved so be careful.

The Copernicus Colony has not been entered into our databases yet so I am fairly sure that the Cylons don't know of its existence. Since you now represent the largest Colonial power it is important that you keep your location secret.

Commander Adama is rearming at Ragnar Anchorage. Once you have seen to escorting all of the survivors out of the combat zone you are to find him. As the senior naval officer he will take complete command of fleet assets while you remain in command of all ground forces.

Keeping our people safe is now your mission, John. You are the last known survivors of the Twelve Colonies of Kobol. It's up to you to ensure that our legacy never dies.

Good luck.

Tajalle blinked hard as she set the paper down. "How many ships have checked in?"

"Twenty five sir." the Ops officer replied.

"And how long since the last one?"

"One hour."

Tajalle shook her head. "I don't think anymore are coming."

Connors nodded sadly. "I don't think so either. Go ahead and begin jump prep. Set a course to the Cygnus Gamma nebula.

"Why there?" Tajalle asked.

"I want our people to do an inspection of the evacuation ships to make sure there are no tracking devices." Connors replied. "Secrecy is our greatest asset now."

"Understood sir."

Sighing heavily, Connors reached down and picked up the handset in front of him as he activated the general announcement system.

"Attention all hands: As you know, a Cylon attack has occurred back home. I now have the unpleasant duty to inform you that the attack is over—and we've lost."

Connors waited as stifled gasps echoed throughout the ship. "Here is what is known: The *Atlantia* has been destroyed, along with most of the fleet. All contact has been lost with the colonies but at last report, all of twelve had suffered major nuclear attacks. It must be assumed that they have all been destroyed. Commander Adama is attempting to rally support at Ragnar

Anchorage and we will join him there once we have delivered the civilians that have joined us out of the combat zone.”

“The task of ensuring humanity’s survival has now fallen to us and it is a mission from which we will *not* shy.

“All ships report ready to jump, General.” Tajalle said.

“Very well, Commander.” Connors replied heavily. “Jump.”

EPILOGUE

A CANDLE IN THE DARK

Commodore Turner nodded with satisfaction as he scanned through the pictures and charts of the binary star system that Major Allen had brought to the C.I.C. “There don’t appear to be any discernable navigation hazards.”

“No sir.” Allen replied as he attempted to contain his excitement.

“What’s the actual distance from this star system to Earth?” Colonel Horvath asked.

“About four light years.” Doctor Zylman replied. “Give or take a parsec.”

“Very well then. Mister Halloran, spin up the FTL drives and lock in a course for this system.”

“Aye sir.” Halloran replied.

“What are you going to name it sir?” Slider asked.

“That’s right. It’s a new star system on our charts and as commander of the mission, you get to name it.” Horvath chimed in.

Turner waved them off. “You know I don’t go in for that stuff.”

“That’s what you’ve said for every star system we’ve mapped on this expedition.” Horvath argued. “This is going to be the last time you get that chance before we go home so name the damn system, sir.”

Turner laughed easily and held his hands up in mock surrender. “Okay, okay.” He relented, “But you’ll have to give me some time to think of something.”

“How about Centaurus?” Doctor Zylman asked.

“Huh?” Horvath asked. “What kind of name is that?”

“It was Colonel Ryan’s favorite creature from myth, the Centaur.” The Doctor replied.

“Very appropriate, Doctor.” Turner replied said turning to Halloran. “Lock in a course for *Centaurus*, Mister Halloran.”

Halloran nodded. “Done sir. All stations report ready for jump.”

The Commodore smiled. “Jump.”

And so this is how the darkness falls. Four thousand years of civilization wiped away in one dark day of death and destruction wrought on humanity by the product of their own hands.

And interesting thing about the darkness though.

Although it is so vast that it can span the universe, so powerful that it can corrupt and twist even the best of our intentions into the worst of our actions...

All it takes is one candle to hold it at bay. One hope to keep the light alive.

Take heart, dear friends. Humanity’s tale is not over, it is just beginning. For as every golden sunset brings on the dark and cold night, the dark and coldest part of the night is also just before the dawn, so keep the faith.

The light bringer is coming.

This story is dedicated with fond gratitude, to

Mr. George Carlin

Comedian extraordinaire, and all around wise ass.

*Your wisdom and common sense will be sorely missed
amongst us mere mortals...*