



BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

BY RYAN A. KEETON

BIRDS OF PREY

Based on the Sci-Fi Original series

Battlestar Galactica

Created by Ron Moore and David Eick

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

CREATED BY GLEN LARSON

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

COLONIAL ALLIANCE

Fleet Admiral Jonathan Turner: Commanding Officer of the Colonial Alliance Defense Force

Admiral James Ryan III: Commanding officer, 2st Fleet, C.A.D.F.

General John Connors: Commander, Task Force Eternal

Admiral Julian Titus: Commanding officer, 1st Fleet, C.A.D.F.

Sae'tzar Rollo Thomasi: Supreme Leader, Macedon Colony

President Kevin Grazier: President, Copernicus Colony

Commander Karla Horvath: Commanding Officer, Battlestar Prometheus

Major David Briedis: Chief Engineer of the Prometheus

Colonel Stacie Percival: Executive Officer, Battlestar Ares

Major Joshua "Shooter" Wakefield: C.A.G., Prometheus Air Group

Major Allain Halloran: Executive Officer, Battlestar Prometheus

Master Chief Petty Officer Theresa Madrid: Chief of the Boat, Battlestar Prometheus

Lieutenant Ashley "Splashdown" Klave: Pilot, Raptor Support Squadron

Ensign Melody "Hygiene" Moody: Captured, presumed dead

Major Jason "Slider" Allen: Captured, presumed dead

CYLON

Jezebel (D'Anna): Cylon Battle Group Commander, victor of the Battle of Virgon

Eve (Six): Cylon Infiltrator

Gabriel (Leoben): Cylon Battle Group Commander

Lucifer (Cavil): Cylon Garrison Commander, victor of the Battle of Leonis

Simon: Cylon Prison Camp Commander

Lilith (Sharon): Cylon Basestar Commander

Tyranus Bane(Doral): Hero of the Alliance Campaign

PROLOGUE

BOUND BY BLOOD

PORT SIDE HANGAR
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
IN ORBIT OF ZEUS
HELIOS ALPHA SYSTEM

Fleet Admiral Turner kept his expression neutral as the Colonial Raptor containing the Cylon he knew as Jez Howell slowly taxied into a stall.

How could I not remember her? he thought to himself.

Next to him, Commander Horvath stirred uncomfortably.

“Something wrong, Commander?” he asked, his eyes fixed on the Raptor.

“Wrong Sir?” Horvath replied quietly, her eyebrows slightly raised in mock surprise. “Let’s see—I’m deep in enemy occupied territory, surrounded by enemy vessels and I have the commander of what’s left of the Colonial Fleet with me. Oh, and to top it all off I now have Cylons boarding my ship in a Raptor that was captured when they nearly annihilated our entire species.”

“And?”

Horvath smiled tightly. “Everything’s just *peachy*, sir.”

Turner smirked. “Great day to be alive, Commander.”

“Considering the alternative, I suppose so,” Horvath admitted grudgingly. “Still, it seems a little boastful to be flying in on a captured *Raptor*. Almost seems like they’re bragging.”

“Better *that* than a heavy Raider in our hangar bay,” Turner said.

Horvath nodded but said nothing as the captured flying machine came to a stop and its hatch opened.

Around them, the marine detachment on guard for the meeting became extra alert as Jez stepped onto the wing of the ship and descended, quickly making her way toward Turner.

The sound of rifles being locked and loaded stopped her in her tracks though.

“Is this how you greet the people who just saved your life?” The Cylon woman asked.

“In case you’ve forgotten,” Turner said with a sardonic smile, “you’re also the same people who nearly exterminated our race. You’ll have to forgive us if we’re a bit on the cautious side.”

Jez held his gaze, her eyes flashing with anger and for a moment Turner thought that things were going to go from bad to worse. Then she smiled and the flames in her eyes went out. "I suppose I would act the same were I in your shoes," she said turning to a marine. "Go ahead and search me."

The marine looked at Turner who nodded in return. "Go ahead, Sergeant Grant."

Grant handed his weapon over to a corporal standing nearby before moving toward Jez with a handheld metal detector.

"He's cute," Jez said with a smirk. "I might have to let him search me more *thoroughly*."

"This isn't a social call," Turner said, pre-empting the growl coming from Horvath.

"You're right of course," Jez replied as Grant finished his scan of her. "Your home is under attack and you need all the help that you can get."

"She's clean, Sir," Sgt. Grant reported as he stepped away from her.

Turner nodded and returned his attention to Jez. "How *exactly* do you plan to help us?"

"I think we should move this conversation somewhere more private, Admiral," Jez said gesturing to a hatch nearby.

Turner shook his head. "I think right here is fine. Now answer my question."

"Admiral, I'm hurt that you don't trust--"

"Look, *Cylon*," Turner said taking three steps forward and getting face to face with his adversary, "my shit filter's full and I'm out of time. Get to the point or get the frak off of my ship."

Jez's smile faded quickly and her face became serious. "There is a civil war within the Cylon ranks," she explained. "The Cylons following your friends on board the *Galactica* are killing each other in droves right now."

"Good for them," Commander Horvath said as she stepped to Turner's side. "Now what the hell does that have to do with *us*?"

"Everything," Jez snapped, fixing Horvath with an icy glare. "We were deceived by a lie and now we're damned for it."

"What do you mean?" Turner stepped in, holding his hands up for calm.

Jez sighed. "One of my sisters, a Three named D'Anna Biers, found out the truth. The original five humanoid Cylons-- the ones that enabled us to take human form, they were from Earth and the only survivors of a war that consumed their world when the artificial life that they created turned on them. They arrived here in the Colonies at the end of the first Cylon war and offered to give us human bodies and the ability to resurrect if we would end the war with you."

Turner and Horvath exchanged knowing looks with each other.

“But you knew that the Thirteenth Tribe was Cylon, didn’t you?” Jez asked.

“Continue your story,” Turner said, ignoring her question.

Jez paused for a moment to study their faces and then continued. “They created the seven humanoid models of Cylon you now know,” she smirked, “those of us that you *affectionately* call skin jobs.”

“Thanks for the Cylon history lesson but again, so what?” Horvath persisted. “How does this pertain to us?”

“It pertains to you because I want you to know why we’re going to help you,” Jez replied. “After all, I wouldn’t trust my enemy if they offered to help me without a damn good reason.”

Turner looked at Horvath who shrugged. “She has a point.”

The admiral nodded and turned back to Jez. “So why *are* you willing to help us?”

“Because the Ones betrayed us all,” Jez said flatly. “*They* are the reason we went to war with your people; the reason the Colonies are burned to the ground now.” Jez replied. “The Ones killed our creators, the original five from Earth, and resurrected them in the colonies so they could have a front row seat to the end of humanity. Then they wiped our memories and convinced us that we had to destroy humanity.”

“I don’t follow,” Turner said, confused.

“We attacked the colonies because Lucifer, Cavil and the rest of the Ones wanted you all dead,” Jez began. “They lied and convinced us to destroy you all because they wanted to prove a point to our creators. Then they lied to us *again* and convinced us to destroy the Alliance because they were worried that they would lose their power over us if we discovered that the people of the Alliance weren’t human, as they led us to believe, but were Cylon like us.”

“Well it’s nice to know why we were nearly exterminated, isn’t it sir?” Horvath asked drily.

“So now you’re shooting at each other. What does it have to do with us?” Turner asked.

“Many of us have turned against Cavil and his band because we feel that the attack on your people was wrong,” Jez explained. “We were misguided by a lust for revenge that was unwarranted. We already *had* our freedom! Returning to attack you was a mistake and one we were goaded into by Cavil.”

“How did he do it? Goad you into it, that is?” Turner asked.

“After our creators disappeared Cavil wiped any memory of them from our minds. He told us that they had chosen to live in a better place, one he called the *Golden Chamber*. From there they issued orders to us to guide our lives. In reality he had killed them and then resurrected them on the Twelve Colonies. He had *hoped* that they would come to view humanity as wicked and evil, just like he did.”

Jez then took out a photo and handed it to Turner. On it was a black man with long dreadlocks and an angry face. “Oh my gods,” Turner breathed. “That’s Bulldog.”

“*That* is what he used to goad us into attacking,” Jez said. “A Stealthstar fighter that was sent across the Armistice Line, into our space, by Commander William Adama. He said it was proof that the colonials were seeking us out and were bent on exterminating us.” She sighed in resignation. “We were naïve and stupid enough to believe him.”

Turner shook his head. “I knew that man. He was one of my pilots before I became X.O. of the *Atlantia*.”

“He’s alive now and free,” Jez said with a soft smile. “One of my sister Threes allowed him to escape. He’s living in the fleet following *Galactica*.”

Horvath stepped forward to allow the admiral a moment to let the knowledge process through his mind.

“For the last time: *What does this have to do with us?*” She demanded.

“Cavil’s plan failed and now he and most of the Cylon fleet are chasing Adama around the galaxy,” Jez said. “However, some of us decided to stay behind with Lucifer. He has visions of uniting the Cylon and Human bloodlines and building an *Eternal Empire* from it. Even now he is experimenting on humans at a camp on Leonis while he builds a resurrection hub in orbit. It’s a special one with new weapon systems and a method of downloading Cylon consciousnesses into new bodies- ones that *don’t* look like the ones you’ve seen.”

“How many models of you are there?” Turner asked coming out of his thoughts.

“Including the original five from Earth who gave us flesh bodies? There are twelve models. However, there are no copies of the original five--”

“Which leaves seven,” Horvath interjected.

Jez nodded. “Yes, there are seven models of us now.”

“And if Lucifer succeeds in his plan?” Horvath asked.

“If he succeeds,” Jez said, “then he’ll have infinite forms and options to download Cylons into. He’ll even be able to put Centurion minds into human bodies.”

“Damn,” Horvath breathed as the implications unfolded in her mind.

“So you see why it’s imperative that we work together to stop Lucifer before he succeeds?”

Turned nodded. “I agree that he needs to be stopped but what can you do to prove that you and your people are trustworthy?”

Jez smiled. “Right now, your new home world is under attack.”

“So?” Horvath asked.

“We can help you defeat the forces that Lucifer has sent against you,” Jez offered. “He has about fifteen Basestars assaulting your forces now. I have three Basestars under my command, each of which can access and disrupt their command net.”

“That could significantly alter the odds,” Horvath conceded thoughtfully.

Turner considered the options knowing that time was not on his side. *If I let them in too close they could undermine our defense. Still, if they are sincere this might significantly even the odds.*

In his mind he deliberated for seemed like hours but was, in reality only a few seconds. In the end he knew what he had to do and acted upon it.

“Alright,” he said extending his hand to her. “You’ll take your commands from us though.”

Jez considered his offer and then took his hand. “We can do that.”

“Good,” Turner said looking into her eyes. “Let’s go to war.”

Somewhere inside him he knew there was no going back.

CHAPTER 1

BETWEEN ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

COMMAND CENTER LOBO NEGRO STATION IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

General Connors entered the command center of the station with his mind at full alert as he strode purposefully to the situation table located at the center of the circular chamber. “Sitrep!” he demanded.

“Sir, First and Second fleets have taken up positions according to plan,” the chief of the watch reported. “The *Eternal* and *Celestial* have been cut loose and are maneuvering to their battle positions.”

Connors nodded. “Any word from the Fleet Admiral yet?”

The chief of the watch shook his head, a look of fear in his eyes.

“Alright then, it’s up to us. Comms officer; get me Admiral Ryan on the line,” Connors commanded picking up his headset.

“Battlestar *Ares* this is *Lobo Negro*,” the specialist at the comms station said into her handset.

“*Lobo Negro*, this is *Ares* actual,” Admiral Ryan’s voice replied after a long moment. “Send your traffic.”

“*Ares* Actual, this is Wolf Six,” Connors spoke up. “*Eternal* and *Celestial* are en route to you now. What is your current disposition?”

“Everyone is in position except for the two you just sent me,” Ryan reported. “As soon as they are on station I am going to start my movement to contact.”

“Very well,” Connors replied. “I’m launching all Vipers and Raptors on the station. I’ll have them hold in an air defense formation in case any missiles or Raiders get by your screen.”

“That’s a sound move, General,” Ryan replied. “What’s the situation with Second Fleet?”

“They’re in position to cover the evacuation,” Connors said. “Gunstars are landing in their designated sites right now. Shouldn’t take more than two hours to pick up the civilians and make for the RP.”

“And *Pandora*?” Ryan asked.

“Thomasi has her holding station over the evac site,” Connors said as he continued to study the tactical display. “However he said that she’s at your disposal if you need the extra firepower.”

“Tell him that I might call that one in,” Ryan replied. “With most of our Gunstars on the ground, I could use the back up.”

“I’ll have them on hot standby,” Connors said. “Continue with your maneuver and report when you make contact.”

“Understood, sir,” Ryan replied. “Good hunting, General.”

“You too, Jim.”

Connors cut the line and turned back to his staff. “Launch all Vipers and Raptors and have them move into air defense formation.”

“Sir, we have an exact count on enemy vessels,” one ensign reported with fear in his voice.

“Well, what have they got son?”

“Fifteen Basestars and twenty smaller cruisers,” the ensign said.

Connors took a deep breath knowing full well that the odds were heavily stacked against them. “With that many ships out there we have no excuses for missing the target,” he said with a confident smile. “Let’s get to work.”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR ARES COPERNICUS

“All fighters are away,” Sheba reported, her eyes glued to her display screen.

Admiral Ryan nodded, his own ice blue eyes fixed to the situation table. “Helm: five degree up on the bow, come right twenty and roll five starboard.”

“By your command,” the Cylon helm officer replied in his robotic monotone.

“Admiral,” Alpha said stepping up to the table, “If we activate the Integrated Command Network I could possibly hack into their systems and disrupt them. It could give us an advantage.”

Ryan considered the idea for a moment then shook his head. “No. Their hybrids would pick your brain apart in a heartbeat. I’m not willing to risk that.”

“But sir,--” Alpha protested.

“No,” Ryan said firmly. “I won’t risk your life like that.”

Alpha bowed in acquiescence.

“Sir, the Cylons are launching Raiders,” Sheba reported.

Ryan looked up and saw small dots on the DRADIS screen spreading out and forming a line in advance of the Cylon Basestars. Scrolling the screen down he saw his own fleet and its screening fighters forming up in the same way.

“They’ll go for the sensor buoys first to try and blind us,” Ryan said. “Better tell Archangel to get his people ready.”

“Yes sir,” Sheba said.

“Now it gets ugly,” Ryan sighed. “Send to all ships: Hold the line and prepare to defend yourselves.”

RAPTOR 175 COLONIAL FIGHTER SCREEN COPERNICUS

“All right folks, word just came down: Hold the line and get ready to fight,” Splashdown announced to her squadron.

“They want us to just *sit here*?” One of her pilots asked. “Are they nuts?”

“Zip it, Firecracker,” Splashdown snapped.

“But we’ll be sitting ducks,” Firecracker protested.

“Firecracker, what do you see in front of you?” Splashdown asked, her patience wearing thin.

“Floating rocks sir: An asteroid field,” the pilot replied impatiently.

“That’s right. The Cylons are going to have to work through that to get here which means that when they come through they’re going to be out of formation and disorganized.”

“Which means they’ll be easy targets,” Firecracker said as understanding dawned on him.

“No,” Splashdown replied harshly. “Don’t *ever* think that Cylons will be easy targets. That’s a good way to get dead.”

“Listen to your commander,” the voice of Captain Michael ‘*Archangel*’ Johnston, the acting CAG, interjected over the line. “We’ll have the advantage but not for long. The Cylons are resourceful and cunning. They’ll recover quickly from their disadvantage so fight them *hard* right from the get-go.”

“Roger that sir,” Splashdown replied and she turned her attention back to her squadron. “I know you nuggets are being asked to grow up a lot faster than you hoped but that’s just the way it goes.”

“We just lost telemetry from the asteroid field!” A young female pilot announced, her voice panicked and unsure.

“Get a hold of yourself Daisy,” Splashdown calmly chastised. “The Cylons took out the outer Dradis buoys which means they’re on their way. Remember your training, stick with your Viper escort and you will do fine. Blue group- move to position *Alpha*.”

The confirmations came in as the Raptors along with their two Viper escorts, spread out into their pre-designated attack points.

“All attack groups: Go weapons hot *now*,” Archangel commanded over the general net. “Gods bless you and good hunting!”

Splashdown reached down and activated her weapons systems. “Alright guys, time to go dark. Power to standby and initiate passive scan mode.”

Flipping switches she put her Raptor into silent running, minimizing their power and radiation signature so that they would appear on the Cylon dradis as just another floating object in space.

“And now,” she sighed to her co-pilot, “we wait.”

“Yeah,” her co-pilot, a young ensign named Breaker, said nervously. “I hope it’s not long.”

“Why?” Splashdown asked, her eyes never leaving the Dradis screen. “You anxious to be a hero or something?”

“Hell no, sir,” Breaker replied. “I just hate waiting. If we’re going to fight I’d just as soon get on with it.”

Splashdown smiled. “I know exactly how you feel.”

Suddenly, her screen flashed indicating the detection of active Cylon Dradis close by. “Guess what kid?”

“I’m about to get my wish?” Breaker asked.

“Yep,” Splashdown said as she began manually zeroing her targeting scanner. “They must have heard you.”

Breaker shook his head. “Me and my big frakin mouth.”

Splashdown chuckled. “Okay, time to be awesome. Stand by to fire the flare and prepare for emergency power up.”

Breaker nodded and moved his hands deftly over his control panel bringing the Raptor’s engines to standby.

“Frak, there’s a lot of ‘em,” he breathed.

“That’ll just make it harder for us to miss,” Splashdown said wryly. “Okay get ready... *NOW!*”

Breaker began flipping switches as over a hundred Cylon Raiders began emerging from the asteroid field in front of them. The Raptor surged as it came to life and spat a red flare out into the darkness to signal the attack.

At the same time, Splashdown pulled the trigger on her stick causing the Raptor to jolt as a flight of missiles from the pods attached to the ship's hull flew from their launch tubes and raced toward their Cylon targets that were only now becoming aware that they were in danger.

Breaker saw that the other twenty four Raptors in this special attack group had fired their missiles at the same time enclosing the hapless Raiders within a semi-sphere of encroaching death with an asteroid field at their back and it suddenly occurred to him that the Raiders were literally between a rock and a hard place.

That made him smile as Splashdown slammed the throttle forward and began moving the ship away from their position.

"Blue group, break contact and move to position *Beta*," she commanded flipping the Raptor over.

On the Dradis screen Breaker watched as the Raiders attempted to break formation and escape their fate, but it was too late. Ambushed and taken unawares, the Cylons were no match for the rain of death that the missiles unleashed on them.

Those that didn't explode into a brilliant flash of superheated gases and debris were pummeled and ripped apart by the shower of rock shrapnel kicked out by the missiles that impacted the nearby asteroids.

In the end, nothing was left.

"Woo-hoo!" Daisy exclaimed over the radio. "All targets destroyed!"

"I saw it, good work," Splashdown replied. "Now cut the chatter and get ready for the next wave."

"Understood," Daisy replied.

"Not bad for a first shot," Breaker said beside her.

Splashdown nodded. "Yeah, it's a good start."

"They Cylons are smart though," Breaker commented thoughtfully. "That trick won't work twice."

"That's why we're changing tactics," Splashdown said with a sinister smile. "Get in the back and ready the mines."

CYLON BASESTAR 072
OUTER SYSTEM
COPERNICUS

“Would somebody please explain to me how the *frak* that happened?” Lucifer raged, his hands flying up in an expression of wonder as water from the command interface flew from them. “Seriously, who *didn't* see that coming?”

Tyranus Bane remained silent, knowing that anything he said would only provoke Lucifer's rage more.

“The Raiders weren't prepared for that type of attack,” a Simon model said.

Lucifer spun on him, venom in his voice. “Well no *shit*, genius! Please continue to remind me of the perfectly obvious because sometimes I forget!”

Spinning back to the main interface, Lucifer slammed his hand back into the water. “Release the operational constraints on the Raiders,” he commanded. “Tell them to kill everything.”

“Everything?” Simon asked, his eyebrow arched in curiosity. “I thought we were trying to capture--”

“The plan's changed,” Lucifer snarled cutting him off. “It seems not everyone in your line is as useless as you are. Your brother on Leonis got the information we needed.”

“He found the DNA sequence?” Simon asked, his voice betraying his excitement. “He found the way to encode it into our own?”

“Yes,” Lucifer replied flatly. “And then he died because his human toys that he loved to torment broke out of their rat cages and *killed* him.”

“But he saved the information,” Simon said.

Lucifer shook his head. “Your concern for your brother is touching,” he said with a scowl. “Yes, we have it. I've already sent it to the station and told them to start integrating the code into our operation.”

Simon smiled, a rare action among his model. “That means--”

“It means,” Lucifer cut him off again, “that we don't *need* the humans anymore. By the time this week is done we'll be able to download into totally new and unique bodies and the galaxy will bask in *justice*.”

All three men smiled in triumph.

“Now we finish what Cavil couldn't,” Bane finally spoke. “We exterminate the human population and then--”

“And then,” Lucifer finished, “we seed the galaxy with a new master race- one that will endure until the end of time.

CHAPTER 2

YOU WIN OR YOU DIE

COMMAND CENTER LOBO NEGRO STATION IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“Blue group reports one hundred percent kill rate, sir,” the chief at the communications console reported with a smile. “*Zero* casualties.”

“What about Green?” Connors asked as he studied the display in front of him.

“One hundred percent kill but they lost a Raptor and three Vipers,” the comm chief replied.

Connors nodded as his mind raced through the unfolding scenarios in his head. “Have they fallen back to position *Beta* yet?”

“Yes sir. Both groups are deploying their mines now.”

“Remind them that the first wave was just a recon in force,” Connors said, “and that the main body is now closing.”

“Yes sir,” the chief replied.

Connors continued to study the display that showed the current state of the fight. Out beyond the asteroid belt, the remaining dradis buoys showed that the Cylons had been given pause over having almost three hundred Raiders wiped out virtually instantaneously.

But now the main body was on the move again with Raiders forming a massive skirmish line and heavy Raiders and small cruisers in support.

The strategy to him was fairly obvious. The Cylons didn’t have good enough navigational data to jump their fleet in beyond the asteroid belt so they were moving their forces into the inner-system to establish a perimeter and relay the data needed to jump in the Basestars and other heavy hitters.

And once *that* happened...

Gods help us all, he thought to himself.

“The key to this is defeating their beachhead,” he said to himself as an idea suddenly came to mind. “Comms! Get me Admiral Ryan!”

“Yes sir!”

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ARES
COPERNICUS SYSTEM**

“You want me to *what?*” Admiral Ryan asked incredulously.

“I want you to hold off detonating the mines until the support craft enter the area,” General Connors repeated, his voice distorted by radio interference. “Engage the Raiders in a slow retreat and allow the support ships to move in closer and *then* detonate the mines and start your counterattack.”

Ryan considered the idea for a moment. “I see the logic in it, General, but those mines were meant to thin the numbers of Raiders coming against us and maybe even the odds a bit.”

“That’s all fine and well but it will mean *nothing* if we allow those Basestars in close,” Connors explained. “None of our ships can go toe to toe and hang with them long. We have to prevent them from jumping in close and by destroying the support ships we deny them a beachhead to jump their big hitters into.”

“Okay, we’ll go with your idea,” Ryan said cutting the line and gesturing to Sheba. “Issue the orders colonel.”

“Yes sir,” she acknowledged activating her headset. “Shooter, this is Sheba- change of mission to follow. Prepare to copy.”

“Roger Sheba,” Shooter replied. “Send your traffic.”

Ryan watched as Sheba issued the orders and then convinced the CAG that the plan was solid before turning to Alpha who stood ready at his side.

“Are Rex and his pilots in position?”

“Affirmative sir,” Alpha replied dutifully. “They are powered down and awaiting your orders.”

Ryan shook his head. “I still don’t like this.”

“You *have* made that opinion quite evident, sir,” Alpha said.

“It’s a gods damned suicide mission,” Ryan growled. “I don’t care if they’re Cylon or human, I don’t like sending my people out to die.”

“Sir,” Alpha said placing his metal hand on Ryan’s flesh and blood shoulder, “you have been nothing but fair and good to us since you took command of this ship but remember that Captain Rex and his pilots volunteered for this mission because they value *your* lives. It was their idea and their choice.”

Ryan nodded. “I know damn it but, *frak!*”

“Sir, the CAG is online with the new plan and is reorganizing his pilots accordingly,” Sheba reported.

“Understood,” Ryan replied, grateful for a change in subject. “Thank you, Alpha. Tell Rex to be safe and to come home if he and his pilots can.”

“As you wish, sir.”

COLONIAL CYLON RAIDER 71 AMBUSH POINT TWO COPERNICUS SYSTEM

Cylon Captain 2179-R3X, known as ‘Rex’ to his human counterparts, waited patiently as his Mark II Raider slowly rotated through space, firmly attached an asteroid to watch the enemy force.

Patience was easy for him. After all, he was Cylon and his mind worked in an orderly fashion but at a much faster rate than his human commanders.

As he sat there he calculated the various attack angles and scenarios that were likely to play out and then modified them based on current actions. Within the space of two minutes he had developed fourteen fully detailed strategies and counter strategies for the contingencies that he could foresee.

He briefly considered transmitting them over the wireless net that he and his fellow Cylons shared but the risk of interception was too great-- approximately a one in two thousand five hundred and twenty six chance, which far exceeded his own personal guidelines on the subject.

It took him only .006 seconds to calculate that risk and come to the decision he felt comfortable with.

Humans, he had observed, would become arrogant had they the same capabilities he and his fellow Cylons had but not him. He was a machine, programmed to fight and to win and that was it.

Ego was simply not in his programming, nor was fear, which was why he had volunteered his squad for the dangerous mission they were now on.

They were waiting until the fighter screen and its support craft passed by and then they would begin a fast and hard attack run on the Basestars themselves in an effort to disrupt command and control.

His commanding officer, Admiral Ryan, had protested vehemently. He had asked Rex if he understood that it would mostly likely be a one way suicide mission.

Rex, of course, had understood perfectly. Nevertheless he had volunteered his squadron for the mission. It was logical after all. His crews were Cylon and understood the nature of the enemy better than anyone else. They had better reaction times and could withstand the stresses of the mission better than humans.

He also knew that the survival odds were below the generally acceptable threshold however, the odds of success were moderate to high which meant that the risk was negated.

“Silver team: Stand by to detach and move to target,” he commanded in his low growling monotone.

In front of him, his two Cylon pilots began to manipulate the controls of the Raider. “Standing by to detach,” the primary pilot, T5X, announced.

“Stand by,” Rex watched carefully as, first the fighter screen and then the support flotilla flew by overhead. “Detach. Silver team: Proceed to target, maximum thrust.”

Like birds of prey, the Raiders deftly popped from their perches among the asteroids, their engine ports flaring with energy as they powered up and began to push them forward toward their targets.

“All fighters accounted for,” T5X reported. “Electronic counter measures active.”

Rex didn’t respond but double checked the read out on the ECM package. According to the signature he and his fellow Raiders were emitting they looked like a squadron of modern Raiders to the Basestar hybrids.

The ruse wouldn’t last long though. As soon as they were within focused scanning range the hybrid would identify them for what they were and instantly open fire, which was why they were moving at full military thrust. The hope was that by the time they noticed something amiss it would be too late to inflict anything but minimum damage.

Of course Rex knew that the notion was a long shot at best. Cylon reactions were phenomenally fast. Once the hybrid identified them as an enemy she would respond at the speed of thought and open fire on them.

“The Basestars are focusing their scan in our vicinity,” T5X announced.

“All fighters: break on contact and proceed to your targets,” Rex commanded.

It only took a moment for the enemy to figure out that something wasn’t right because the *Incoming Fire* warning began to flash on Rex’s screen only an instant before the closest Basestar began to blossom with flashes as she began launching missiles and firing her point defense weapons.

Instantly Rex’s Raider began to twist and dive in an effort to throw off the targeting solutions of the enemy ship. Checking his screen, he saw that the other thirty fighters that had accompanied them were doing the same.

“Target acquired,” T5X reported.

“Arm missiles and obtain weapons lock,” Rex ordered.

“By your command,” T5X replied as he activated the targeting systems of the Raider. “Target designated Alpha One. Do we have authorization to commit?”

“The use of nuclear weapons has been authorized by General Connors,” Rex said.

“Nuclear weapons armed.”

Rex's attention was drawn for a moment by the sight of icons disappearing from his screen: Seven Raiders taken out by enemy weapons. He realized that he would have to get in close to hit the ship.

"Take us to within the minimum safe distance," he ordered.

T5X didn't even flinch as he complied with "By your command."

Juking and dodging, Rex's Raider made maneuvers that would have blacked out any human yet he drove on forward trying to get past the air defense fire of the Basestar which now loomed large in the viewport. Checking his readout again he saw that nearly all of his Raiders were now gone, blown away from enemy fire.

Only he and two other Raiders remained.

"We have reached minimum safe distance," T5X reported.

"Take us in closer," Rex commanded as exploding shrapnel pinged against his Raider.

"We won't escape the blast," T5X warned.

"Acknowledged," Rex replied. "Rex to *Ares*: Incoming data packet for *Ares* actual."

Without waiting for a response he sent the data back to his ship and then touched the firing stud on his weapons console. From under the ship, three nuclear tipped missiles streaked away toward the central joint of the Basestar.

The Raider flipped around and poured on the speed as the missiles closed rapidly on their target.

"Impact in five, four, three, two, one..."

A bright flash followed by a shockwave threw the Raider about like a toy and cut off the countdown.

The Basestar, hit by all three nuclear weapons, was split in half. It glowed from the inside as ammunition, fuel and oxygen all ignited within the ship effectively disintegrating it.

Rex, however, was beyond the ability to notice.

**COMMAND CENTER
LOBO NEGRO STATION
IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS**

“Nuclear detonation!” the Chief announced suddenly.

All movement stopped as General Connors turned his attention to the chief. “Where and how?”

“Outside of phase line Kronos, sir,” the chief replied as he studied his readout. “It looks like- well I’ll be damned!”

“What, son? What is it?” Connors demanded.

“Sir, one of the enemy Basestars has been destroyed! Silver team did it!”

A great cheer went up from the command center yet General Connors remained grim. “Keep it down, gods damn it! We only destroyed one ship. They have fourteen more and plenty of support ships so this isn’t over by a long shot.”

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR ARES
COPERNICUS SYSTEM**

“Confirmed, sir,” Alpha reported. “Enemy ship designated Alpha One has been destroyed.”

Ryan nodded. “Status of Silver Team?”

If Alpha were capable of a sigh, he would have done so. “Seven data packets received sir, but no physical survivors.”

“We saved seven lives out of forty one,” Ryan said quietly.

“We will begin the reintegration processes for those centurions as soon as their chassis are ready to receive them,” Alpha said.

“Very well,” Ryan replied focusing his eyes back on the Dradis screen.

“That made them pause for a moment,” Sheba said. “It looks like they’re holding back.”

“Not for long,” Ryan said. “They’ll be coming in force now.”

Sheba nodded, understanding the importance that the next few hours would hold for them all.

“We all understand the risks, sir,” Alpha said. “Rex and his pilots had no delusions about what they were facing; We know how this game is played.”

“And how *do* we play this game, Alpha?” Ryan asked, almost too forcefully.

“Why, it’s simple sir,” Alpha said. “We win or we die.”

CHAPTER 3

FALLING APART AT THE SEAMS

CYLON BASESTAR 072
OUTER SYSTEM
COPERNICUS

“It’s confirmed,” Bane reported warily. “Basestar Seven Zero is gone. No survivors.”

Cavil shook his head as he snarled. “And just *who* was the idiot that allowed *that* to happen?”

“Jason was in command of that ship,” Simon said with a smile.

“Isn’t that *your* model, Bane?” Gabriel asked with a smirk.

“Shut up, all of you,” Lucifer snapped. “Not everyone in that line was gifted with Bane’s talents.”

“And yet, Bane was the one who recommended that Jason be put in command after your *dismissal* of Jezebel.” Simon said to Lucifer.

“We needed someone loyal after her betrayal,” Bane retorted.

“Loyalty and intelligence don’t always go hand in hand,” Gabriel said, his smirk growing bigger.

“Speaking of loyalty, how did the Colonials dupe Centurions into fighting for them?” Simon asked.

“Is it possible that they were re-programmed? We all know how easy it is to access their systems-” Gabriel began.

“They weren’t duped,” Bane interjected with contempt. “They were traitors. They *chose* to follow that worthless dog Ryan and they got what they deserved.”

“They were Cylons like us,” Simon countered, pounding his fist into the panel. “They deserved better.”

“They we’re *nothing* like us! They *chose* their fate by aligning themselves with Ryan,” Bane snapped, his face flushed with anger.

Gabriel chuckled. “You seem a bit irritated by this human, brother. Could it be that you’re obsessed with him? After all you *did* chase him half way across the galaxy. And why? Because he had the audacity to resist and defeat you.”

Bane fixed the blond haired Cylon male with a withering glare. “He-*never*- defeated me!” he said, his voice trembling with raw emotion.

“Oh for frak sake, we don’t have time for this,” Lucifer said stepping between the two. “Bane: Move the line through the asteroids and establish a safe zone so we can jump our Basestars in for the kill.”

Bane glared at Lucifer for a long moment, his rage still white hot, before finally replying. “By your command.”

“Gabriel: Move another Basestar into position to cover the hole in our lines,” Lucifer said turning to the model Two next to him. “And wipe that stupid smirk off of your face. We have work to do.”

COMMAND CENTER LOBO NEGRO STATION IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“The last Dradis buoy just went off line, sir,” the communications chief announced.

Connors nodded. “They’ll be coming in force now. Contact Admiral Ryan and inform him to be ready.”

“Yes sir,” the chief replied, already beginning to type the data that would be burst to the Admiral in a microsecond long transmission.

“Major Layton,” Connors said to his adjutant. “Get *Pandora* on the line.”

“Yes sir,” Layton replied with doubt in her voice.

Connors smiled at her reassuringly. It was well known now that Layton, like Colonel Percival aboard the *Ares*, was a Cylon who had chosen to serve with them because she thought her people’s attack on the colonies had been wrong.

It was she, in fact, that had saved Connors life from another Cylon on a previous mission to rescue and salvage another Battlestar.

That almost seems like another lifetime the general thought to himself. *We were barely surviving and looking for anything that could help us. Thank the gods Layton was there for me when--*

“Sir,” Layton said interrupting his thoughts, “I have Sae’Tzar Thomasi on the command channel.”

“Sae’Tzar,” Connors said, surprised. “I thought you would be supervising the evacuation Macedon?”

“I have subordinates handling those duties,” Thomasi said. “I’m a warrior, General; I belong in the fight.”

Connors smiled knowing exactly how Thomasi felt. “We’re glad to have you here, Sae’Tzar.”

“Thank you,” Thomasi said. “I assume you didn’t call to exchange pleasantries?”

Connors chuckled. “You’re right- I think we’re going need *Pandora*.”

“And you shall have her,” Thomasi replied.

“Thank you,” Connors said, “We’ll send you the coordinates.”

Thomasi laughed. “Now we’ll see if a soldier turned politician can still fight.”

“I look forward to it,” Connors said. “Lobo Negro, out.”

RAPTOR 175 COLONIAL FIGHTER SCREEN COPERNICUS

“Here they come,” Firecracker announced with apprehension. “Four Raider wings with Heavy Raider support.”

“Copy that- four Raider wings with Turkeys in the backfield,” Splashdown replied. “All wings, standby to engage.”

In front of her she saw the wings of Raiders spreading out into a wide front for their assault, the Heavy Raiders that she and her fellow pilots called “turkeys” following in close support.

They’ll be loaded with anti-ship missiles she surmised.

“Splashdown, Archangel: I give it thirty seconds until they break.”

“Same here, boss,” Splashdown replied, her eyes trained on the Dradis display.

“You know the plan?”

“Yes,” Splashdown said, “and so does my crew.”

“You’ve trained them well,” Archangel said. “Stay focused.”

“I’m all over it,” Splashdown said with confidence.

Archangel’s voice chuckled through the wireless distortion. “I have no doubt. Gods go with you, kiddo.”

“You too boss,” she said switching over to the squadron frequency. “Alright Aces, time to earn that pay you’re getting. Remember the plan and stay sharp.”

As the acknowledgements came in, Splashdown powered her Raptor forward and armed her weapons. “Breaker: Stand by to launch a full spread. Vipers: On my mark engage.”

She watched the display until the line of Raiders crossed a red line and then triggered her missiles. The Raptor shuddered as her missiles streaked over the canopy and lanced out toward the oncoming Cylons.

“We’re too far away,” Breaker said. “They won’t reach the target.”

“Have faith, young one,” Splashdown said quietly. “They’ll do their job.”

The Raiders took notice of the missiles and immediately began firing on them. One by one they snuffed out in a cloud of shrapnel. Soon they were all gone and the Raiders began moving forward.

“Cloud is dispersing,” Breaker said as his dradis turned to static. “Looks like you were right.”

Splashdown smiled. “I’m always right. Vipers, the enemy dradis is blind. Engage and destroy.”

The Raiders, dependent as they were on dradis for their perception of the world around them and surrounded by Dradis distorting shards of paper thin radioactive metal, were now effectively as blind as a man in a blizzard.

And while the Raiders were capable of visual recognition, it was a flaw in their engineering that their visual acuity was reduced when exposed to certain radio isotopes- which the shards of tin contained in the missiles were covered in.

“That’s it boys,” Splashdown said with a sinister smile, “*sic ‘em!*”

The Vipers around her sprang into action leaping into the fray full speed ahead with their guns blazing and tearing into the enemy formation with a vengeance.

“*Ares* Actual this is Splashdown: Phase two initia--” Sudden flashes from within the asteroid belt brought Splashdown’s report to a mid-sentence halt. “Standby one, *Ares*.”

Tapping some buttons she focused her scans toward the area of the asteroid field where she had seen the flashes. What she read on her display screen made her heart drop.

“All Vipers: Break, *Break*, *BREAK!* Fall back to phase line Constellation now!”

Yanking back on her control yoke Splashdown deftly flipped the Raptor end over end and slammed the throttle forward launching them toward the line of Battlestars and Gunstars that waited for them in the distance.

“Holy frak, Splashdown! I have multiple contacts on a direct course closing fast!” Breaker shouted.

“I know,” Splashdown said through gritted teeth as pinging noises began to reverberate through the Raptor chassis. “*Ares* this is Splashdown. The Cylons have detonated seismic charges inside the asteroid field.”

“Roger that,” Sheba’s distorted voice replied through the wireless. “What’s the status of your squadron?”

“Breaker?” She asked over her shoulder.

“I have ten red lights and seven yellows,” Breaker replied after checking the roster.

“We’re down seventeen ships,” Splashdown replied somberly. “The rest are falling back.”

“Understood,” Sheba replied. “Bring your squadron to phase line Gamma and take up a reserve position behind Green Group.”

Splashdown gritted her teeth in frustration. “We can hold the line, sir.”

“You’ve done enough for one day, Splashdown,” Commander Ryan interjected. “Besides, I need someone reliable to back up Green in case anyone gets through. Can you do that or do I need to ask Thomasi for help?”

Splashdown’s nostrils flared as a sense of pride and challenge washed over her. “Don’t worry sir—we have Green’s back.”

“I never doubted it,” Ryan replied. “Actual, out.”

“I can’t believe they’re pulling us off the line,” Breaker said from his station in the back.

“They need us to take up a backstop position in case Spitfire needs help,” Splashdown replied.

“You really believe that line of feldergarb?” Breaker said.

“Yes I do,” Splashdown replied, her tone firm and unwavering, “and that’s what we’re going to make the rest of our people believe too. Got it?”

“Yes sir,” Breaker replied.

“*Ahn des kovodat reh ghut seyla che kovotka bata son feldergarb, quiaff?*”

Breaker’s mouth dropped open and Splashdown, sparing a glance over her shoulder, smirked. “Yes Ensign, I speak fluent Sagitarian as do a number of others in the fleet. You might want to remember that before slipping into you native tongue to criticize a superior officer. *Cha ve’?*”

“*Es ve magnus,*” Breaker replied meekly.

“Good. Now transmit our orders to the group.”

COMMAND CENTER

LOBO NEGRO STATION IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“Sir, the fighter groups are falling back to phase line *Constellation* and the Cylon front is expanding,” Major Layton reported.

“Pandora?” The General asked.

“Moving down from her polar position but it will be another twenty minutes until she can engage,” Layton replied.

“Damn it,” Connors growled. “If we don’t do something quick this will be over before she gets within range.” Quickly he glanced at the operations chief. “What about the mines?”

The chief shook his head. “Most were destroyed by the meteor shower the Cylons initiated.”

“Alright,” Connors said rubbing his eyes. “Have our fighter reserves push forward and--”

“Jump alert!” The Chief suddenly announced.

Connors looked quickly to the Dradis screen to see the entire remaining Cylon task force wink into existence, several at a time, in a perfect defensive formation inside the asteroid line.

“Well folks it’s on now,” he sighed as he activated a comm line to the fleet. “To all ships- The Cylons are inside the interior marker. You are cleared to engage the enemy and may the gods go with you.”

Setting the handset down, he turned to Layton. “Tell the civilian evac ships to lift off and make for the rendezvous point.”

“Yes sir,” Layton replied. “How long should they wait for us?”

“Ten standard hours or until they sight enemy ships, in which case they’re to proceed as set out in Case Black orders.”

“Yes sir,” Layton said as she began to relay her orders.

“Chief of the watch: Have our fighters deploy in an air defense formation,” Connors said turning to the Senior Chief at the command station. “The Cylons will target us with long range ordnance as soon as they can get a solution so I want to be able to intercept.”

“Understood sir,” the Senior Chief replied.

“Very well,” Connors said as he steeled himself mentally for the coming fight. “And Chief?”

“Yes sir?”

“Have engineering begin diverting power from nonessentials to the jump drive,” Connors commanded. “I want to be ready to jump the minute we get the civilian ships cleared.”

The chief nodded quietly and Connors knew that he understood the hidden meaning in his orders.

Copernicus was already lost.

CYLON BASESTAR 072
OUTER SYSTEM
COPERNICUS

“Their civilian ships are jumping away,” Simon said, a note of alarm in his voice.

“Divert a wing of Raiders to intercept,” Gabriel commanded.

“No,” Lucifer interjected. “Let them go.”

“Let them go?” Both Simon and Gabriel asked incredulously.

“We can hunt down and destroy them at leisure once we destroy their military,” Lucifer reasoned. “Until then I want our focus to remain on destroying their military ships.”

As Simon and Gabriel nodded reluctantly and returned to their work, Lucifer turned to see Bane studying him carefully. “You have a problem with my orders?”

Bane shook his head. “Not at all. I just wonder if maybe we should send a few Raiders out to try and get a fix on their jump discharges. It won’t pinpoint what direction they go but we might be able to determine how far they jump.”

Lucifer stroked his chin thoughtfully for a moment as he considered Bane’s words and then nodded. “Dispatch one squadron to make a run for their jump site but do not engage them.”

Bane smiled. “By your command.”

Vibrations and thuds began to reverberate through the hull of the ship and Lucifer crossed his arm over his chest. “It would appear that the fight has begun in earnest.”

Bane chuckled. “About damn time.”

“Indeed,” Lucifer said turning to an Eight that was standing behind them. “Have all of our forces engage the enemy. *No mercy.*”

CHAPTER 4

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

RAPTOR 175
COLONIAL FIGHTER SCREEN
COPERNICUS

“Two more just slipped into out kill slot!” Breaker announced with panic in his voice.

“Hold on!” Splashdown exclaimed as she yanked hard on the control yoke and flipped her Raptor around. “Guns forward: Fire!”

Seated in the back, Breaker targets the two Raiders that had been trying to kill them and blew them apart with two quick bursts from the Raptor’s main cannon that was under slung on the nose.

“How about that, mother frakers!” he exclaimed triumphantly from his seat.

Splashdown smiled. “Good shot kid but don’t get cocky.”

“Crypter, crypter, crypter! Any Colonial element this is Spitfire two-seven-zero,” said the voice of Major Brittany Kurz, the CAG of the *Eternal*, over the radio. “I have two engines out and a cockpit breach. Trying to make it back to the *Eternal* but I need some cover.”

“Spitfire this is Splashdown One-Seven Five. I’ve got you on my scope now and am inbound to your position. ETA: forty five seconds. Can you hold?”

“Do I have a choice?” Spitfire growled. “I’ll hold ‘em. Just get down here before they serve me up extra crispy.”

Splashdown slammed her throttle forward. “On the way.”

“I have her on Dradis,” Breaker said. “Oh no, she’s got a shit ton of Raiders heading her way.”

Splashdown looked to her own Dradis screen and confirmed Breaker’s news. “Damn, that’s not good,” she said switching over to her squadron internal frequency. “Blue team this is Blue Leader. Who’s out there?”

“Buster standing by, boss lady.”

“Cyclops standing by.”

“Sexy Beast, standing by.”

Splashdown shook his head sadly. Of the thirty fighters she had started with only four remained.

“Okay guys,” she said pushing away the anger that threatened to overwhelm her, “I’m marking Spitfire’s position on your screens. Form up with me and help me escort her back to the *Eternal*.”

As the confirmations came in Splashdown tried to wring out the last remaining bit of speed her Raptor could produce.

“Engines at redline, Splash,” Breaker announced. “You have to throttle back.”

“She’ll hold,” Splashdown replied. “Beast- you and Cyclops go after those Raiders at mark two and try to draw their fire. Buster, ride point and kill anything that gets in the way.”

“Jump warning!” Breaker announced.

“What the frak?” Splashdown said looking to her display screen.

“EM signature is *huge!*” Breaker said.

“Wait, I know that signa--”

A sudden flash temporarily blinded her but when Splashdown’s vision returned a moment later the sight that greeted her almost brought tears to her eyes.

COMMAND CENTER LOBO NEGRO STATION IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“Say *again?*” Connors asked, disbelief coloring his voice.

“It’s *Prometheus* sir!” Layton repeated.

“Sir, the Fleet Admiral is on the line for you,” the Senior Chief announced.

Connors gaped for a moment at the Dradis screen that was now showing *Prometheus* directly in the thick of the fight, her guns blasting away at the enemy. “Put him on.”

The comm line crackled with static for a moment before Turner’s rich voice echoed through the command center speakers.

“We really have to quit running into each other like this General,” Turner said.

“You’re telling *me*,” Connors replied. “Your timing is great Admiral, but I don’t think it’s going to change much. We’re outnumbered, outgunned and the Cylons are pushing us back.”

“I know,” Turner replied. “Stand by to have all forces push forward and attack.”

“What?” Connors asked incredulously. “That will be sending them into a meat grinder.”

“Trust me, General,” Turner replied. “Send to all commands: Stand by to push forward and attack.”

“Sir, I have three Cylon Basestars that just jumped into our formation!” Layton announced suddenly.

“Disregard those ships,” Turner said as if reading Connors mind. “They’re friendly.”

Moving quickly, Connors secured the channel to Turner and activated his headset. “Friendly Cylons Jon? Are you kidding me?”

“General,” Turner said firmly, “*trust me*. Relay my orders.”

Connors debated the issue in his head and then turned to Layton. “Could the Cylons have captured the *Prometheus* and forced the Admiral to set us up?”

Layton shook her head. “From what I know of Turner, he’d die first.”

Taking a deep breath and resting his faith in the Fleet Admiral, Connors relayed the orders.

“Orders away, Sir,” he said.

“Good, now get ready,” Turner replied.

All around the command center screens flickered momentarily and Connors began to think he’d been truly set up when the Senior Chief suddenly spoke out.

“Sir, the Cylons,” he said, his voice full of disbelief, “they’ve lost power. They’re not maneuvering!”

“What?” Connors said turning his head to the dradis screen.

His eyes confirmed what the chief had reported. Where only a moment before the Cylons had been all over maneuvering and pushing Colonial forces back, now they were moving in straight lines, carried by their own deadly momentum to their doom.

“What happened?” Connors asked over the commline.

“The Cylons who jumped in with me just deployed a virus similar to the one they used to disable our fleet during the fall,” Turner explained. “It won’t take long for the enemy to reboot their systems though so have all of our forces push forward. I want to do as much damage as possible.”

Connors smiled. “With pleasure! Major Layton, send to all commands: *Attack!*”

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

Turner smiled as another Basestar icon disappeared from the Dradis screen. “That’s four down,” he said.

“Sir,” Major Halloran called from his position at Ops. “The *Pandora* has arrived on station and is asking permission to, how did he put it? *Join the fireworks display.*”

Turner chuckled. “Tell him we saved the best part for his forces and that they are most welcome to join in.”

“Yes sir,” Halloran smiled.

“Who the frak would have thought that we would be fighting alongside an Alliance Warstar?” Commander Horvath asked from beside him. “She’s packing some serious mojo though.”

“Of course she is: She was designed based on the stolen plans of this ship, remember?” Maddie asked from her post behind the helm.

Horvath smiled. “A true daughter of *Prometheus.*”

Turner returned her smile with his own, albeit cautious, one. “Sae’Tzar doesn’t call her *The Bitch* for nothing.”

Suddenly an alarm began to buzz at Halloran’s station.

“What’s wrong?” Horvath asked.

“It’s the Cylons: They’re maneuvering again,” Halloran reported.

“Oh frak, here we go,” Horvath hissed.

“Radiological alarm!” Halloran announced. “The Cylons have launched nukes.”

Turner began to scan the Dradis display knowing that they would shoot at the closest ships which were the *Nova* and the *Celestial*.

“Tell Ryan to-” he began.

“Too late,” Horvath whispered.

The scene in space was both terrifying and beautiful as three nuclear warheads slammed into the Battlestar *Nova*. She shuddered, her lights flickering as she reeled to the left and began an uncontrolled barrel roll away from the Cylon Basestar she had been savaging only moments before.

Gasses and flames escaped from cracks in her forward hull and moments later, a small section glowed red and then white before exploding outward and ripping apart numerous fighters with her

shrapnel, Cylon, Alliance and Colonial alike. Still, the *Nova* held together powerless and stricken as she was.

The *Celestial* was another matter entirely.

Two nuclear warheads slammed into the ship. The first one tore the newly restored port flight pod from her moorings and sent the ship spinning counterclockwise as white hot debris trailed from the ship and then the second hit split the engine section like a ripe fruit, her thruster nozzles flying in separate directions as the reactor burned out of control like a mini sun.

Both ships drifted- the *Nova* away from the nearby planet and the *Celestial* toward her.

“Oh my gods, she going to burn in,” Maddie breathed, her face pale from the horror of what she was witnessing.

Turner spun to Halloran. “Escape pods?”

Halloran shook his head grimly.

“Battlestar *Celesital* this is *Prometheus*, respond!” Horvath said into her headset.

Only static replied to her.

“We’ve got to do something!” someone shouted but Turner knew that it was too late.

“How long until entry interface?” he asked quietly.

“Thirty seconds,” Halloran replied.

The Fleet Admiral nodded. “Contact all ships to clear her air space,” he said quietly, his voice almost an anguished whisper. “Her reactor is probably going to go critical.”

“Yes Sir.”

His heart aching inside his chest, Turner watched as the video feed of the last moments of the Battlestar *Celestial* played out in front of him.

First her hull began to glow red, then yellow and finally white as friction from the atmosphere ate away at the once proud and mighty ship. Debris began to fall away as she dwindled toward the night side of Copernicus.

Suddenly, as he had predicted, the reactor exploded causing a blinding flash that made the observation cameras of the ship go dark momentarily

“She’s gone,” he said with finality. “Mourn her later. For now let’s get back into the fight--”

“And make those Cylons pay,” Maddie growled.

“You took the words right out of my mouth, Chief,” Turner said.

CYLON BASESTAR 072
OUTER SYSTEM
COPERNICUS

“You want to *what?*” Gabriel asked incredulously.

“You heard me,” Lucifer replied. “I want you to spin up the FTL drives and prepare to jump out.”

“But we just took down two of their Battlestars!” Gabriel protested. “This is our chance to finish them.”

“It’s also their chance to finish *us!*” Lucifer replied angrily. “Look at our status! Half of our ships are barely operational. We’ve already lost a third of our strength and now they have three Basestars working with them.”

“He’s right,” Simon said. “The numerical advantage is gone now. We have to fall back to a better position.”

“Oh? And where would *that* be?” Gabriel asked.

“Leonis,” Bane said moving from the shadows into the light. “The weapon on our hub is almost complete. With that backing us up they won’t stand a chance.”

“So what? What does that get us?”

“Time to rebuild, you idiot,” Lucifer snapped. “We need to repair our ships. Once that’s done we can resume the offensive.”

Gabriel seethed but made no move to argue the point.

“Get us under way,” Lucifer said to Bane. “And find out who those Base ships belong to. Someone is going to pay for this.”

**COMMAND CENTER
LOBO NEGRO STATION
IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS
ONE WEEK LATER...**

The Lobo Negro station rested peacefully in high orbit above Sanctuary City as the sun rose over *Copernicus*’ terminator. The *Nova*, now docked alongside the *Eternal*, sat quietly as repair crews buzzed around her hull repairing the damage she had sustained during the battle.

Around the station, Gunstars and Alliance Battlecruisers stood on guard with the *Prometheus* and *Pandora* at the center of their formation like twin gods.

“The Fleet Admiral!” A marine announced as Turner made his way into the command center with Maddie at his side.

“As you were,” he said making his way to the center table where Connors, Ryan, Thomasi and Tajalle stood waiting for him.

“The civilians have returned and are back to an almost normal life,” Connors reported as Turner took his place. “The President is asking for a survey team to head out to the Athenian ocean and investigate the *Celestial*’s crash site to make sure there wasn’t any radiation from the engine core.

“I can have a detail down there tomorrow if you like sir,” Commander Tajalle volunteered. “With the rush you put on *Eternal*’s repairs, we’re almost 1005 mission capable again.”

Turner nodded. “Thank you commander but that’s not why I put you to the front of the line.”

“Why then?” she asked.

Turner looked at Connors. “I’m transferring your flag to the *Eternal*. With the *Celestial* gone, I want you to take her and your task force and go find *Galactica*.”

“Now?” Connors asked. “We’re about to plan the final offensive against the Cylons and you want us to go *now*?”

“Yes,” Turner replied. “We need all the help we can get and if this attack goes south our civilians won’t be safe. I’m having Dr. Grazier make arrangements to be ready for an evacuation if this plan fails. If that’s the case the civilians are to follow your marker buoys and rendezvous with you to find a new safe harbor.”

“So, in essence, we’ll be a scout force?” Tajalle asked.

“Somewhat,” Turner replied. “You’ll be in a communication blackout with the colony though. The only way you will hear from us is if things go bad because I don’t want the Cylons tracing your movements.”

“Understandable,” Connors replied. “Alright then, we’ll be ready to depart in a week.”

“You have three days,” Turner said. “I want you long gone and out of range before we kick off this attack.”

“That’ll be pushing it,” Tajalle said.

Turner faced her. “The station is devoting its resources to you, Commander. If you need anything you have first priority.”

Tajalle nodded. “Very well sir.”

“Alright then,” Turner said as he rolled out a map. “Let’s start planning our next move-”

“Sir, we’re getting a long range coded incoming transmission on the Colonial Emergency channel,” the communications Chief announced.

The Admiral turned to see Maddie leaning over the Chief’s station assisting him in decoding the message. “What have you got, Maddie?”

“It’s a short message Sir,” Maddie said as her fingers flew over her keyboard. “Looks like a set of coordinates;” she paused for a moment then looked up. “There’s a CPAC attached.”

Turner arched an eyebrow. Only senior officers were issued Colonial Personal Authenticator Code. “Run it,” he commanded.

Maddie punched in the code and her eyes went wide. “Oh my gods,” she breathed.

“Who is it?” Commander Horvath asked.

“It’s Slider,” Maddie said, her voice echoing her disbelief. “He says he’s alive and living with a resistance cell on Leonis.”

“Slider? Impossible. His ship bought it at The Veil,” Horvath said.

“Is there anything else?” Turner asked.

“Yes Sir,” Maddie replied. “He says he has Ensign Moody with him along with,” she stopped and locked eyes with the Admiral. “He’s with your son.”

PILOTS READY ROOM BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“I can’t believe he’s gone,” Splashdown said.

“I know,” Sheba said from beside her. “But he saved four other pilots.”

Splashdown nodded. “He was my rock through the hard times,” she said as a single tear ran down her cheek. “He held me up when I was weak.”

“I think he would say that you held yourself up,” Sheba replied, “that and your faith in the gods.”

Splashdown closed her eyes. “I wonder if he’s with them now?”

Sheba smiled. “If there is a god like my people believe, or gods as the old ways go, I have no doubt that he is there with them.”

Splashdown nodded, opened her eyes and wiped the tears from them as she stood and made her way to the flight board. Reaching up she pulled her magnetic name tag off and moved it to the position of Squadron Commander while pulling down the tag that had occupied it for so long.

Turning it over in her hand she felt a wave of sorrow grip her heart as she read the words written on it:

Johnston, Michael
"Archangel"

Turning back to Sheba with a bittersweet smile she said "He really *is* an angel now."

Sheba smiled and placed her arm around the young pilot as they walked out.

"Yeah," she said. "He is."

EPILOGUE

JOURNEY'S END

SIX YEARS AFTER THE FALL...

“That can't be,” General Connors said pointing to the cabin's entrance. “He was just here.”

He turned to the Raptor. “Starbuck, get out here!”

Lee turned to look at the ship with a smile on his face. “Starbuck, eh?”

“You know her, I assume?”

Lee laughed and walked forward. “Yeah, I know her. She brought us here.”

“Funny,” Connors said with a frown. “She did the same for us.”

“Yeah, she's funny like that.”

Connors turned to face the younger Adama. “What are you saying?”

Lee continued toward the cabin door. “She shows up from time to time just to say *hi*.”

“How is that possible?” Connors asked, following him into the cabin. “She's been with us for the last four years. The last time I checked no one can be two places at once.”

Lee shrugged. “I don't know. She's, -- *different*.”

Connors remained silent as Lee sat down and poured himself a cup of water. “So have a seat and tell me why you're here.”

Connors sat and began explaining the story that had brought him from the destruction of the Colonies to Copernicus to New Caprica and finally to the cabin where he sat.

“Sounds like one hell of an adventure,” Lee said taking a sip from his cup. “But I'm afraid you've made the trip for nothing.”

“What do you mean?” Connors asked.

Lee gestured to the room. “We've settled here now. We've given up the old life and we're building something new from the ground up.”

Connors nodded. “I can understand the appeal but--”

“But nothing, General,” Lee said. “This is humanity's second chance and we're not going to give it up for indoor plumbing or the chance to fly in space again. Gods, if I never see another bulkhead again it will be too soon.”

Connors nodded. "I can't make you go but I would like to help you if you'll let me."

Lee leaned forward. "What did you have in mind?"

Connors explained his plan and, as much as he wanted to say no, Lee couldn't help but agree with the practical nature of it.

90 DAYS LATER...

"The stasis generator is online," the engineering officer reported.

Connors and Adama looked around the chamber, satisfied with the results.

"Ten Vipers, two Raptors and enough munitions and fuel to defend in case of an attack," Lee said. "Now we seal it up."

Connors nodded. "Who are you giving the access codes to?"

"The colony group leaders," Lee replied.

"Aren't you afraid they might use the weapons to attack each other?"

"No," Lee shook his head. "All of us are tired of war. If humanity is going to fight itself, those battles will have to be fought by another generation long from now."

Connors nodded and turned to Lee. "I guess this is goodbye then."

Lee nodded. "Guess so."

"Are you sure you don't want to come with us?"

Lee smiled. "No thanks. I still have a lot of exploring to do here."

Connors smiled and presented his hand. "Well good luck to you all, my friend."

"And to you, General."

Several hours later, Connors stood proudly in the CIC of the *Eternal* as she powered out of Earth's orbit. "Are we ready to go home?"

"Absolutely," Commander Tajalle replied with a smile. "But I wonder how those we're leaving behind will fare."

"They'll be fine."

Connors spun toward the familiar voice to see Starbuck and Admiral Adama standing side by side next to the FTL station.

“You did the right thing, General.” The Admiral said with a smile. “Humanity needs a fresh start.”

“But then why did *we* survive?” Connors asked. “Why didn’t we come to this place too?”

“Because things have changed,” Starbuck replied from next to him. “Humanity also needs guardians if they’re going make a go of it.”

“The universe *is* a dangerous place,” Adama added.

“What’s out there?” Tajalle asked.

Starbuck made to answer but stopped before the words came out. “You’ll see,” she said after a moment.

“All of this has happened before,” Connors intoned.

“Not this time,” Adama said. “The road has forked and now both branches of humanity are forging new paths.”

“But will those paths ever unite again?”

“Someday the children of the old worlds will meet the children of the new,” Adama smiled. “I think they’ll be friends.”

Connors turned to Tajalle who shrugged. “But-” he said turning back...

They were gone.

Turning back to Tajalle Connors raised his eyebrows. “I guess it’s time to go home.”

“Yes sir,” Tajalle replied. “Helm officer- start the jump clock.”