



BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS

BY RYAN A. KEETON

LEGACY

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

FOR UNCLE BILL BENNETT SR
THANKS FOR TEACHING ME HOW TO BE *COOL*.

A note on the time convention used here:

ABL = After the Battle of Leonis.

ALL OF THIS HAS HAPPENED BEFORE...

Life here began out there. That is the truth of it. Far across the galaxy on a world lost to time, humanity came into being and lived amongst the Gods and, for a time, it was good.

But humanity was a flawed creation.

Jealousy, resentment, anger, lust and unchecked ambition brought this golden age to an end. Thus did the Lords of Kobol exile their children from the gardens from whence they came.

They wandered long and far across the black oceans of space until they came to a system of stars they named Cyranus. There they spread out and made nations unto themselves. They progressed and grew in both knowledge and power and, for a time, it was good.

Then they gave in to their baser nature and began to fight amongst themselves. The wars, much like fire, would flare and subside with the winds of time.

And then, during a time of relative peace, the children of the gods crossed the threshold and created their own children and in them they placed all of the flaws and fallible traits they themselves possessed.

And then that life turned on them.

The war was brutal as the children of humanity tried to exterminate their parents. It raged across all the worlds that man called home costing millions of lives both Human and Cylon alike.

And then the war ended. No one knew why the Cylons sued for peace. Some humans believed that they had shown their creations the depth of their resolve, which convinced the Cylons to accept peace and leave.

But that peace was a lie.

Forty years later, the Cylons returned and in one brutal night of murder, they wiped out most of humanity.

And the Gods wept for they had seen this happen amongst their children before.

On Earth they had watched the Thirteenth Tribe, themselves a creation of artificial means, destroy their world because of the sins of their ancestors.

On Terra, they had watched as their descendents fell to their baser nature and spread out to conquer.

And now, among the Twelve Colonies, night was again falling.

Something had to change....

PROLOGUE

*Hello. Is there anybody in there?
Just nod if you can hear me.
Is there anyone home?*

It was a dream.

James Ryan knew as much but it didn't matter because he was walking the corridors of a ship he hadn't seen in a long time, and it felt good to be there, like coming home after a long journey.

Home. The world of his birth had been Caprica, now dead for what seemed an eternity, but the place he had called home and where it existed in his mind and heart was on the deck of a Battlestar.

And this particular Battlestar was a special home for him.

"Jim," a voice echoed like a whisper down the corridor.

He spun, but found only the soft lines of the empty corridor that the crew called officer country. He looked left and right and then shrugged.

Must be my imagination, he thought as he continued past the senior officer quarters and made his way down the stairs to the primary command access causeway.

Frak, I must be getting old, he thought as his knees began to ache.

"Jim," the voice whispered again.

Ryan spun looking for the source of the voice. "Who's there?"

"Jim, come to me," the voice said.

Ryan turned and began striding toward the CIC. He didn't know why but he felt absolutely positive that he would find the source of the voice there.

Ignoring the stiffening pain in his legs, he walked fast, almost breaking into a run. Finally, he arrived at the sliding doors and smiled at the seal etched into the small glass at the top.

Battlestar Prometheus, the seal said. *BSG-22*

He smiled seeing the fleet designator exactly how he preferred to remembered, before the Battlestar Group designator had been changed to reflect her status as the fleet flagship.

Touching the pad next to the door, he waited while it read his fingerprint.

“Colonel Ryan, James L.,” the voice of the V.I. said as the door opened to reveal the CIC inside. “Logged- the executive officer has entered the CIC.”

Ryan couldn’t help but chuckle. It had been a long time since he had been the X.O. of the *Prometheus*.

Carefully, he stepped through the door and made his way into the center of the room, where he froze.

“Jim, glad you could join me,” the man at the situation table said.

“You,” Ryan breathed. “It’s really *you*.”

Jonathan Turner smiled. “Of course it is, It’s my ship, right?”

Ryan nodded warily. “Riiiiight.”

Ryan walked slowly toward his old station and took up his post across from his old commander.

“What’s going on here?” he asked.

“Something wonderful,” Turner replied with a warm smile. “I can’t wait to show you.”

“Show me?”

Turner nodded. “Something amazing is happening, but I need your help.”

“How can *I* help *you*?” Ryan asked holding out his hands. They were still strong but now were old and wrinkled. “I’m not exactly a fresh nugget.”

“Its okay, Jim,” Turner replied, pointing to Ryan’s chest. “Everything you need is right there.”

Ryan shook his head. “I can’t believe I’m even saying this. *This*,” he said gesturing his arms out wide, “*this* is just a dream! It isn’t real, and neither are you.”

Turner smiled patiently. “Is that what you really think?”

“It’s what I *know*,” Ryan replied forcefully.

“And how do you know that?” Turner asked.

“Because-”

Suddenly the ship shook beneath his feet and alarms began to blare.

“What’s happening?” Ryan demanded.

“It’s time for you to go,” Turner replied.

“Go?” Ryan asked as the alarms grew louder and the shaking became worse. “Go where?”

“Don’t worry, Jim. Everything will be fine,” Turner reassured him as he began to fade into a white mist.

“Wait, don’t go!” Ryan said reaching out.

“Relax Jim,” Turner said as he faded away, “I’ll be back.”

Around him the ship began to shake badly as he looked frantically for a way to escape. The alarms blared louder, something flashed...

***FLEET ADMIRALS RESIDENCE
SANCTUARY CITY
COPERNICUS
50 YEARS ABL***

Fleet Admiral James Ryan came awake with a loud gasp as he sat up in his bed. Next to him, his alarm clock was blaring.

Blinking away the sleep, he turned and touched the button to turn the alarm off before lowering himself back into his bed.

“No, no, no,” a female voice said as his bedroom door slid open. “You can’t do that, sir. Today’s a big day, no sleeping in.”

Slowly, the sleep fog in his mind dissipated and the memories came flooding back to him. It was the fiftieth anniversary of V-Day and, as the oldest living veteran of the conflict, he was expected to make a big speech at the capital today.

“I’m too old for this shit,” he grumbled as he peeled his blankets away and sat up in bed.

Well into his eighties now, Ryan definitely didn’t look his age, but he damn sure *felt* it. His once blond hair, having long since faded to a snowy white, was still immaculate and he still had good muscle tone despite his advanced years yet, the bones they were attached to creaked with age.

“Let’s go, sir,” the young female wearing ensign’s rank said as she set out one of his uniforms. “My grandmother will have my head if I don’t have you down to the capital by zero-nine-hundred.”

Ryan smiled. “Your grandma might be fleet admiral now but I still remember when she was a just cook in my galley,” he said, pulling his trousers on. “I’ll be damned if she’s going to be giving *me* orders.”

“Oh, she wouldn’t *dare* try to give orders to the only *living* ex-Fleet Admiral,” the ensign replied. “That’s why she gives *me* orders.”

“Yeah,” Ryan grouched, “she knows I won’t refuse *you* because I don’t want you to get in trouble.”

“Exactly,” the ensign smiled sweetly.

“I say it’s dirty, underhanded *blackmail*.”

“Gran calls it *good tactics*,” the ensign countered.

Ryan began to retort but let it fall silently from his lips as his memory suddenly reached back to Admirals Tajalle and Maximo, the two Fleet Admirals who had followed him.

Tajalle had held the post for fifteen years after he had retired. She had been the driving force behind refitting the fleet just prior to the Ovion War. She had been retired for only a year when she was diagnosed with cancer. Her health had gone downhill fast, and she died only twelve weeks after her diagnosis.

Ryan had attended her funeral and delivered her eulogy personally.

The next Fleet Admiral had come from the former Alliance fleet. Tyson Maximo had been a hard leader, but a hell of a fighter. His leadership had been instrumental in defeating the resurgent Ovions when they had come to Copernicus seeking revenge on their former oppressors.

Like Tajalle, he hadn’t fared well in retirement having died just six months ago, two months after his successor had put on the white uniform.

Now Ryan was the only living ex-Fleet Admiral and now the oldest veteran of the Second Cylon War. Sae’Tzar Rollo Thomasi *had* been the oldest living vet but his death five years prior had elevated Ryan into that particular position of honor.

Ryan smiled thinking back to the days just before Thomasi had died. The two men had been sharing a meal and making bets on who would die first.

“If I die first,” the leader of the Macedon nation had declared proudly, “you have to perform my eulogy aboard the *Pandora* in your white uniform.”

Ryan had shaken his head. “I hate that damned thing,” he said. “I can’t believe that I let you and Grazier talk me into making it the official uniform of the Fleet Admiral.”

“*You* never had to wear it,” Thomasi retorted. “You made the order take effect *after* your retirement.”

“Because it’s *hideous!*” Ryan grumbled.

Thomasi smiled. “Always the master of fashion.”

“If I were a master of fashion, I wouldn’t have designed *that* rag,” Ryan retorted.

“That’s probably why we didn’t consult you,” Thomasi said with a smile. “If I die first, though, that’s what I want you to wear. Take it or leave it.”

Ryan had sighed dramatically. “Fine, but if I die first, you have to deliver my eulogy aboard the *Eternal* in your full ceremonial dress *and* you have to drink a toast of Ambrosia to me.”

“I haven’t drank since the war,” Thomasi said, “but for you I will. The ceremonial uniform, though,” he cringed, “it’s so damned heavy and garish I don’t even like wearing it for the Annual Conclave.”

“If I have to wear something horrid, so do you,” Ryan said with a smile.

Thomasi had nodded and both men shook hands.

Two weeks later, Thomasi had a heart attack and died at his desk.

Ryan had honored his word to the friend who had once been an adversary.

“Do you know how long it’s been since I wore this horrible thing?” he asked the young ensign as his mind came back to the present.

“Five years ago, sir,” she replied, rolling her eyes in exasperation. “You wore it to Sae’Tzar Thomasi’s funeral and you hated it.”

Ryan gave her a sheepish grin. “I supposed I’ve told you the story, then?”

“You’ve only mentioned it twice a day since you were invited to the ceremony.”

“I’m going to have to talk to your grandmother about your attitude, ensign,” Ryan frowned.

“Go right ahead, sir,” the ensign replied pulling his polished shiny boots out and setting them by his bed. “She’ll tell you that I got it from *her*.”

“No doubt about that,” Ryan quipped. “Now go on and let me get dressed.”

“Yes sir,” she said walking out the bedroom door. “I’ll be making your breakfast,” she called back from the hallway.

“No eggs, damn it,” Ryan replied. “Kaplan told me my cholesterol was high again.”

“Then stop eating fatty foods,” the ensign replied before adding, “*sir*.”

Ryan chuckled. This apple didn’t hadn’t fallen from the tree.

Not one bit.

CHAPTER 1

OLD FRIENDS

*Someone told me long ago, there's a calm before the storm
And I know- it's been coming for sometime...*

***SANCTUARY CITY
COPERNICUS
50 YEARS ABL***

Ryan frowned as he stepped from the car that had delivered him from his cabin by Connors Lake to the Turner Capital Building.

“He would have hated this,” Ryan said as he took in the ten foot bronze statue of Turner that stood in front of the capital building that bore his name. “He would probably be snapping orders that it be taken down at once if he were here.”

“Yes sir,” his escort replied, “but he *is* a hero.”

“Hah!” Ryan snorted. “He would have laughed out loud at that notion.”

“Perhaps,” the escort said thoughtfully. “But I wouldn’t venture to guess his thoughts on it. After all, I’ve never had the privilege of knowing him the way you did.”

Ryan nodded, conceding the point. “That’s true; however I think you would have been surprised by him.”

“How so?” the ensign asked.

“Because he wasn’t the all-glorious, demigod-like leader that the histories have made him out to be,” Ryan said.

The ensign looked confused. “We were taught that he was very firm and disciplined while in command.”

“And he was,” a female voice said.

Ryan smiled and turned to meet the woman walking down the steps, her stride parade-ground perfect despite the obvious limp she carried. The woman's Fleet Admiral's uniform was an immaculate white and gleamed along with the awards and ribbons aligned neatly on the gold sash spanning her left shoulder to right hip.

"Splashdown," Ryan said extending his hand. "How's the leg?"

"Still gone, just like it was the *last* time you asked," Fleet Admiral Ashley Klave said as she fixed her steely gaze on the ensign at his side. "I see that my granddaughter was able to get you here on time."

"Despite his best efforts," Ensign Erin Klave said with a smile. "Hi, Gran."

Splashdown smiled and nodded to her granddaughter. "Why don't you go get us some coffee? I'll take over escort duty from here."

"Yes sir," Klave replied as she saluted smartly.

Ryan watched Splashdown as she observed her daughter proudly. "She's a good kid, Splash."

Splashdown turned to him. "I know," she said with a sly smile. "She's going to make a good commander someday."

"When does she start her pilot training?"

Splashdown sighed. "She doesn't know it yet but she'll be shipping out next month."

"She's been a good aide," Ryan said. "Better than the *last* one, for damn sure."

Splashdown gave him a sideways glare. "You gave that poor kid nervous fits. Do you know I *still* hear it from Maddie every time I see her because of how you treated her son?"

Ryan waved her off. "He turned out just fine. What is he now? A lieutenant?"

“A *captain*,” Splashdown corrected him. “He’s the senior flight trainer on the *Eternal*.”

“The *Eternal*,” Ryan sighed and shook his head. “It’s a shame to see the former flagship of the fleet reduced to a training vessel.”

“She’s sixty years old, Jim,” Splashdown replied as they began to move up the steps. “What do you expect us to do with her? It’s not like she is fit for combat duty anymore.”

Ryan nodded. “When will *Atlantia* launch?”

“One week from today,” Splashdown said proudly. “The President wants to make a big spectacle out of it. He’s asking me to recall *Columbia*, *Challenger*, *Nova* and *Enterprise* for it.”

“That’s half of the fleet,” Ryan said with a scowl.

“I know,” Splashdown replied. “Not to mention that I have *Enterprise* investigating something important in sector seventeen-zero-one.”

“Seventeen oh one?” Ryan asked. “What’s so important out there?”

Splashdown smiled. “We don’t know— yet.”

Ryan was about to press her for more when a young captain came out of the doors and rendered a salute. Both Ryan and Klave returned it and continued making their way inside. Yet, as the doors opened Ryan swooned, his head feeling suddenly very heavy as the world seemed to spin around him.

“Jim? *Jim!*” a voice called out to him distantly.

He tried to look to the source of the voice but found his vision blurry and his eyelids suddenly heavy and closing.

“*JIM!*”

**FLAG SUITE
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS**

“Jim, did you hear me?”

“Huh, what?” Ryan said turning to face his commanding officer.

Fleet Admiral Turner laughed as he poured Ambrosia into Ryan’s glass. “You need to get some rest, Admiral.”

Ryan shook his head as if to shake out the cobwebs. “My crew has me running on Cylon time.”

“That’s because they *are* Cylons,” Turner said, pushing the glass toward Ryan. “*You*, however, are not. You need to get more rest.”

Ryan nodded. “I’ll work on it, sir,” he said taking a sip of the amber liquid and enjoying the burn as it slid down his throat. “What were you saying?”

Turner smiled. “I was saying that, according to Slider’s latest report, my son is one of the main leaders of the resistance group he’s linked up with.”

Ryan smiled. “You have proud papa written all over you.”

Turner leaned back in his leather chair and took a sip of his own drink. “I’m just happy that he’s *alive*.”

“To surviving,” Ryan said as he raised his glass in salute.

Turner raised his own and took a long pull from it. “I’ve decided to incorporate them into our attack plan.”

This got Ryan’s attention. “How so?”

Turner leaned forward and unrolled a map across his desk. “That’s right outside Baghera,” Ryan said, referring to the capital city of the southern continent. “How can anything be alive there?”

“The Cylons only nuked certain sites on Leonis,” Turner explained. “Apparently, the Cylon in charge felt like Leonis had some special significance, so

they only nuked the capital city, Fort Gastineau and the Kronos Air Base. Everything else, they gassed with a non-persistent nerve agent.”

“I visited Fort Gastineau in my third year at the academy,” Ryan said. “Situated right in the middle of the Leonis Plains. I remember it being very beautiful there.”

“It *was* beautiful, but our last recon of the planet showed that the plains have been burned to ash,” Turner said with a note of sadness.

“Okay, so apparently Leonis can still support life,” Ryan said. “What is it you want to do?”

Turner pointed to a mountain ridge that ran along the eastern side of Baghera. “Slider and his group are located *here*. He says they have approximately a hundred fighters with two hundred and fifty civilians, mostly rescued from the prison camp where he was being held.”

“That’s a lot of people,” Ryan said skeptically. “How do we get them off the planet?”

“We’ll send in Colonel Kelley with his Marines,” Turner said.

“How many Marines are we talking about?” Ryan asked, leaning back in his chair.

“Two battalions,” Turner replied.

Ryan almost spit his ambrosia out. “*Two battalions?*”

Turner nodded.

“That’s over half of our total Marine strength,” Ryan said.

“Yes,” Turner agreed. “But I’m confident that the Cylons are going to force a major engagement once they realize we’re there to collect the survivors, so I want a large enough force to cover the extraction.”

Ryan nodded, seeing the logic in his plan. “So how does that work into our overall plan?”

“We’ll jump the Gunstar *Titan* in with the Marines, along with six assault shuttles,” Turner explained. “It’ll be a close in jump, so once they’re there, the Cylons will know and be all over them.”

“What about Vipers?”

Turner shook his head. “We’ll need them for the main assault on the station.”

“The Marines will be sitting ducks without air cover,” Ryan protested.

“I know but they’ll only have to hold out for a little while,” Turner said pointing to the map. “Once they’re down, I’m betting the Cylons will move their Basestars into a blockading position close to the planet. Once that’s done, we’ll jump in the fleet and commence our assault.”

“So the rescue mission is just a diversion?”

“I like to think of it as a diversion with a purpose. We distract the enemy *and* we get our people back,” Turner said as he pointed to the charts on his desk. “Once the Cylons see us jump in, they’ll redeploy but we’ll have the advantage of surprise. If we hit them with our nukes, we might be able to force a couple of them to burn in.”

Ryan shuddered involuntarily, remembering the sight of the *Celestial* burning in over Copernicus. “It could work. Still, how do we take out that station?”

Turner smiled. “*This* is where it gets interesting.”

And then he explained his plan, and Ryan realized that he was right-

It *was* interesting.

X.O. QUARTERS BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS IN ORBIT OF COPERNICUS

“No,” Maddie said firmly, shaking her head as she watched her husband put on a black combat uniform. “No way. You are *not* going on this mission.”

Allain Halloran smiled at his wife and kissed her on the forehead. “That’s not the way it works, baby.”

“I don’t care if it works or not,” Maddie replied. “You are not marching into a fully operational Cylon space station. I worked too hard to get you to marry me, damn it, and I am *not* about to be a widow.”

Halloran pulled out his old black beret and looked over it with loving pride for a moment before donning it. “The fleet admiral has given me an order, Maddie. I can’t very well disobey it.”

“He *didn’t* order you, you volunteered,” she retorted.

“You’re right: He pulled us all in, explained the mission and asked for volunteers to go,” Halloran sighed. “And *I* am the senior special operations officer in the fleet now that General Connors is gone. I *have* to go.”

“Why?” Maddie asked, her face firm but her eyes filling with tears.

“Because you can’t lead from behind,” Halloran replied.

Maddie looked into his eyes for a long moment and then nodded. “All right, but on one condition.”

Halloran smiled. “Which is?”

“Don’t get dead,” Maddie said.

“I think I can agree to that,” Halloran said as he drew her into his embrace.

They kissed long and passionately, so much so that it was still fresh in her mind two days later as Maddie entered the CIC of the *Prometheus*.

“Glad you could join us, Chief,” Commander Horvath said, taking notice of her entry.

“I never miss a good party, sir,” Maddie replied as she took her post behind the helm crewmen and studied her display. “Helm is a station keeping and all systems are green.”

“Very well,” Horvath replied. “We’re five hours from launch- I want a full system report from all section leads at T-minus three hours.”

“Understood, sir,” Maddie said turning to the communications crewman. “On the One-M-C, Casper.”

Casper flipped a switch and nodded to Maddie.

“Attention on the *Prometheus*,” Maddie began, “all section leaders be prepared to deliver a full Green Two status report to the commander at T-Minus three hours. I say again, all section leaders be prepared to deliver a full Green Two status report at T-minus three hours. That is all.”

“Thank you, chief,” Horvath said.

“My pleasure, sir,” Maddie replied.

“Sir,” Casper suddenly spoke. “Falcon Six has cleared the ship and is requesting clearance to jump.”

Maddie felt her heart freeze for a moment thinking of her husband but quickly let it pass as she mentally pictured what he would be doing at that moment.

“Put him on the speakers,” Horvath said as she picked up her hand mic.

“You’re on,” Casper said.

“Falcon Six, this is *Prometheus* Actual,” Horvath said.

“Actual, this is Falcon Six,” Halloran’s voice replied.

“You are cleared to jump,” Horvath said. “Just remember- no stopping for souvenirs. This little working vacation needs to be short because I want you back at your post, ASAP.”

“Tell my wife to keep my seat warm,” Halloran’s voice crackled through the distortion of the speakers. “I’m sort of particular about who put’s their ass in my chair.”

“You worry about your *own* ass, mister,” Horvath chided him. “Good hunting.”

“Thank you sir,” Halloran said. “Jump in two minutes, *mark*. Falcon Six-out.”

Maddie continued staring at the speaker beside her until she suddenly felt a hand on her shoulder. Turning, she saw Horvath standing there with a confident smile.

“Don’t worry, chief,” the commander said, “he’ll be fine. He’s a tough bastard, after all.”

“He has to be,” Maddie chuckled. “He’s married to *me*.”

***FLEET ADMIRALS OFFICE
TURNER CAPITAL BUILDING
SANCTUARY CITY, COPERNICUS
50 YEARS ABL***

James Ryan fluttered his eyes open and took a deep breath. The first thing he noticed was that he was lying on a couch inside the Fleet Admiral's office.

The second thing he noticed was that it was lumpy and uncomfortable.

And then he realized that everyone staring at him.

"Please tell me that no one kissed me," he grouched.

"Told you he'd be fine," Splashdown said. "You *are* okay, aren't you?"

Ryan frowned. "If you don't stop fawning over me like some fraking milk maid, you're going to see just *how* okay I am when I get up from here and kick your ass."

"Yes ma'am," Ensign Klave said with a wry smirk from beside her grandmother. "That would be the cantankerous old bastard whose company I've come to enjoy *so* much."

"Watch your mouth, ensign," Splashdown said, "or I'll have your mother wash it out with soap."

"With respect, ma'am," the ensign said with a smile, "she is currently aboard the *Challenger* doing a patrol in the Kobol system."

Splashdown pursed her lips. "Hello? Fleet Admiral here," she said pointing to her rank. "I *will* recall her and her entire Battlestar to make that happen and she'll do it *in front of her crew*."

The ensign smirked yet didn't shy away. "I'll bet you would, too."

"You're damn right I would," Splashdown said, her face a stony mask. "Do you think I would put up with all the crap of being Fleet Admiral if the rank didn't have its benefits?"

The younger Klave smiled as Ryan winked at her. “Mom always said you were a hard-ass.”

“She’s right,” Splashdown said. “Now go get the Admiral some water.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Ryan chuckled and sat up as the ensign left the room. “Yep, she’s a Klave alright.”

“Oh, shush,” Splashdown said as she helped him to a standing position. “That’s all her father’s influence.”

Ryan nodded sadly, remembering the face of the young man who had been Erin Klave’s father. A solid man and a good Marine, he had died when the Ovions had attacked.

Six months before she had been born.

“How long was I out?” Ryan asked.

“Maybe five minutes,” Splashdown answered. “What do you remember?”

“We were walking up the stairs,” Ryan said, his voice distant. “And then I...” his voice trailed off.

“You what?” Splashdown asked.

Ryan smiled sadly. “I was back on *the Barge* and Jon was there.”

Suddenly the memory came back, clear as day, and Ryan wasn’t smiling as he sat up. “He told me to come find him.”

“Find him?” Splashdown asked, her eyebrow arched curiously. “He died over Leonis fifty years ago. How are we supposed to find him?”

“I don’t know, but he told me where he would be,” Ryan said as he snatched a piece of paper and pen off Splashdown’s desk, and began writing a set of numbers out.

26-99-51-29-37-26-72-10-27-96

Splashdown looked at the numbers for a long moment before she turned to Ryan, her face ashen. “How did you know these numbers?”

“Turner told them to me,” Ryan replied as he rubbed his eyes. “Why?”

Splashdown swallowed hard. “Because these are the coordinates the *Enterprise* sent back to us. This is where they are heading in sector seventeen-zero-one.”

Ryan set his jaw firmly. “Then that’s where I have to go.”

CHAPTER 2

HALLOWED GROUND

*Who says you can't go home
There's only one place they call me one of their own*

RESISTANCE BASE CAMP LEONIS

The hand on Slider's shoulder startled him out of his reverie as he turned from his view of the valley spread below them to find Hygiena standing beside him.

It had been several days since they had made contact with Admiral Turner and the fleet and even longer since the escape, but he hadn't seen much of Hygiena since the first night.

He had been busy coordinating the rescue with the resistance group leaders and Colonel Kelly, the commander of the relief force that was coming to take them home.

Home.

Slider had grown up on Caprica, the capital of the Twelve Colonies, as the son of a rich industrialist. His grandfather had made a fortune working for Greystone industries, but had left the company two years before the Cylon War started.

During the war he had worked with the government on countermeasures to keep the Cylons from infiltrating Colonial computer systems, which had made him even wealthier.

After the war, his son, Slider's father, had followed his father's footsteps and created a thriving business based on computer protection. It was, in fact, his father's design that had been the starting point for the Virtual Intelligences that ships like the *Prometheus* now employed.

All of that was gone now. Caprica was nothing more than an orbital wasteland of radioactive dust, and the people who had once lived there were now just shades of a bygone era.

“Are you all right?”

“Just remembering, that’s all,” Slider said as he turned toward her. “How are you?”

Hygiena took a deep breath. “I think I’m pregnant.”

Slider’s eyes went wide with surprise. “Um, what?”

Hygiena smiled weakly. “You heard me.”

Slider and Hygiena had become intimate about six weeks before, just a few nights before her abduction by the Cylon named Simon. It had been a moment of loneliness that had gripped them both and sparked a passion that consumed them.

“That’s- that’s,” he stammered.

“I don’t know if it’s yours.”

Slider stopped. “But you said-”

“And I *haven’t*, Hygiena interjected. “You’re the only one I’ve given myself to.”

Slider considered her words for a long moment before realizing the terrible truth behind them. His face turned to stone and his eyes burned and as he reached out to gently touch her face, a tear rolled down Hygiena’s cheek.

“I am *so* sorry I didn’t get there sooner,” he said, his words not more than a strangled whisper. “Oh gods, I am *so sorry*.”

Hygiena smiled through her tears, now flowing freely. “It’s not your fault. You saved me, after all.”

“But not soon enough,” Slider growled. “I hope that son of a bitch resurrected, because if I see him again—”

Hygiena put a finger to his lips to silence him. “I don’t want that.”

Slider looked at her questioningly.

“I want you to be here for me and this child because I can’t do this alone,” she said.

“Oh gods, of course,” he said pulling her into his arms tightly. It had never occurred to him that what she needed most wasn’t his promise to avenge her honor, but his acceptance and love.

“No matter what happens, no matter how this child turns out, it’s you and me for the long haul,” he said as he held her head to his chest.

“Good,” she said, her relief evident in her voice. “Now let’s finish this and go home.”

“Yeah,” Slider replied, “but we have one more important thing to do before we go.”

CYLON COMMAND STATION IN ORBIT OF LEONIS

Centurions and humanoid Cylons alike dodged and weaved as Lucifer stalked through the corridors of the command station toward the command center, located just below the northern pole and deep within the station.

Behind him, Tyranus Bane kept a respectful distance as they made their way into the command center where a smiling Simon awaited him. “Lucifer, welcome home.”

Lucifer said nothing as he reached out and grabbed Simon by the throat.

Suddenly all eyes were upon them as Lucifer brought Simon close. “You said you would have the resurrection system working by now,” he growled. “Why isn’t it?”

“You said to focus on the weapons system,” Simon gasped.

“And you can’t do *both*?” Lucifer roared. With a flick of his wrists, Simon’s neck snapped, and Lucifer let the body flop to the floor.

“Bane, get the resurrection system on line,” Lucifer commanded without turning. “We’re going to have a fight on our hands soon and I want to make sure we have a safety net.”

“By your command,” Bane smirked, turning to an Eight. “Begin concentrating our resources into getting the resurrection system on line.”

“We already had double shifts working on installing the hardware,” the Eight replied. “There are only so many of us.”

“Try using Centurions; they’re good for heavy lifting.”

“Are you kidding me?” the Eight asked incredulously. “Do you have any idea how delicate this work is?”

“As a matter of fact, yes,” Bane replied. “However, I think you’ll find that Centurions are more agile than you believe them to be. Besides, it’s not like you have a lot of options. Lucifer is going to want results quickly and if he doesn’t get them...”

He shrugged and the Eight took his meaning.

“I’ll do what I can,” she said nervously.

“I hope so, for your sake,” Bane said with a smirk. “Lucifer is far less forgiving than I am.”

***COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR CHALLENGER
50 YEARS ABL***

“Admiral on deck!” the marine standing guard at the entrance of the CIC announced.

“As you were,” both Ryan and Klave said simultaneously.

Klave cast a sideways glance at her predecessor and Ryan smiled sheepishly. “Sorry, old habit.”

Klave smiled and strode to the commander who stood at attention. “Commander, it’s good to see you again.”

Commander Angelina Klave smiled and saluted smartly. “Good to see you, too.”

“It’s a regular family reunion here,” Ryan quipped as he made his way slowly to the command station.

“You brought Erin, too?” Commander Klave asked.

“No,” Splashdown said, shaking her head. “She’s aboard the *Eternal*. I bumped her up the roster so she started her nugget training two days ago.”

“Good,” Commander Klave said. “Now then, what’s our mission?”

Splashdown handed her a paper. “Lock in these coordinates and jump us there.”

“Very good sir,” Klave, said handing the sheet to her operations officer.

“Once we’re there, we’ll rendezvous with *Enterprise* and her escort ships and proceed further,” Splashdown explained.

“Should we prepare for combat?” the commander asked.

“I don’t know,” Splashdown replied, “but I wouldn’t go in flat footed.”

The commander nodded. “Ops- Spin up FTL one and two and prepare for jump. CAG- Get the alert Vipers into the tubes and be prepared to launch the CAP once we jump. X.O.- Post Marines at all vital areas and designate a QRF to be ready for incursion.”

With her officers ready for action and relaying her orders, Commander Klave turned back to Ryan. “Sir, I have an escort ready to take you to your quarters.”

“I can take the hint,” Ryan smiled. “I need a nap anyways.”

The commander and the Fleet Admiral watched as Ryan left the room before turning to each other.

“I thought that sector was restricted,” Commander Klave said quietly.

“It *was*,” Splashdown asked.

“Then why are we taking him along?”

“Because he thinks he knows what’s out there,” Splashdown replied looking back at the door where Ryan had exited.

“What *is* out there?” the Commander asked.

Splashdown looked around to make sure no one was listening in and then leaned in closer. “Two weeks ago, the *Enterprise* reported an energy burst from

system Alpha two-six that was synonymous with a Colonial jump signature. After making sure there were no other ships in the area, they jumped into the outer rim of the system to do a detailed recon.”

“What did they find?”

“A ship,” Splashdown replied. “One that shouldn’t be there.”

“Cylons?” Commander Klave asked.

Splashdown shook her head and handed her a note from her pocket. “*This* is the automated code that they received on a repeating signal.”

“That *can*’t be,” Commander Klave breathed.

“All things being equal, I’d agree. However, things aren’t equal,” Splashdown replied as she folded the paper and placed it in her pocket. “Ryan has been having visions of the ship... and the *admiral*.”

Commander Klave’s eyes went wide. There was only one person she still referred to as *The Admiral*.

“Now I *know* were on a wild goose chase,” the commander said. “He’s been dead for-”

“I know,” Splashdown countered, “but he was able to produce the coordinates to the ship from a vision he had in my office.”

“He could have gotten those numbers from anywhere,” the commander argued.

“No,” Splashdown shook her head. “Nobody in the command group knew about them except myself, and the *Enterprise* has been on a comms blackout since they radioed this in to me.”

“That doesn’t mean he didn’t get them from somewhere else. You know how he is,” Commander Klave said. “Face it- he heard about the news and found a way to get back out here for one more adventure.”

“If that’s the case, then so be it,” Splashdown said fixing her daughter with a firm gaze. “After all he did for us, if he wants one last adventure into the unknown I think he’s earned it.”

“And what if he has a heart-attack and *dies* out here?”

Splashdown smiled. “Then I think he will die a happy man.”

**COMMAND BRIEFING ROOM
GUNSTAR TITAN
RAGNAR SYSTEM**

Colonel Stewart Kelly studied the map in front of him as his senior officers gathered around the table where he stood at.

“As you can see, based on the terrain here we’ll have the high ground as well as a very good defensible position to operate from. We could probably hold that position against a major assault for a week.”

“Are we planning a long defense, sir?” Major Michael Hyun, the 2nd Battalion commander, asked.

“No,” Kelley replied, “and therein lies the problem.”

The colonel took a red grease pencil and circled a small valley that was over watched by the hill they intended to defend, as well as a hill on the opposite side that had a commanding view. “*This* is our primary landing site.”

A collective groan went up from the assembled officers.

“That’s a fraking shooting gallery, sir,” Major Amy Broussard, the 1st Battalion commander said. “With the *Titan* on the ground, the Cylons are going to have a lovely umbrella to hide from us in.”

“That’s why she won’t be on the ground long,” Kelly replied. “We’re going to do a combat drop in the LZ and then move at high speed toward the resistance camp site. Once there, we’ll set up a hasty defense and prepare them for evacuation.”

“Where will the *Titan* be while this is going on?” Major Hyun asked.

“We’ll be at a location where the Cylons can’t find us,” said Colonel Boyd Harmon, the commander of the *Titan*.

“And it’s a location that will be kept secret for now,” Colonel Kelley interjected.

“In case the mission goes to hell?” Major Broussard asked with a smirk.

Kelley winked at her. “I knew there was a reason I chose you for command,” he said with a smile. “She’s right- if the mission goes to hell we don’t want the Cylons knowing there’s a Gunstar sitting ripe for the picking. With that in mind, we’ll be on a comms blackout until we signal for pickup. At that point, the *Titan* will make a low altitude jump into the atmosphere and land in the LZ. It will be time critical, so we need to make sure that we have the LZ secure.”

“Where will the rest of the fleet be?” Major Broussard asked. “Why can’t they give us some support?”

“They’ll be otherwise occupied and that’s all you need to know. In the meantime, here are your assignments,” Kelley said with a smile as he handed out paper copies of their mission. “Major Hyun- you and your *Hellfighters* will be first off the boat. You’ll secure the LZ and then cover the rear as we make our way to the camp site.”

“Yes sir,” Hyun replied as he studied his print out.

“Major Broussard, your *Fighting Tigers* will take the lead and set up the initial defense.”

“We’ll make sure the porch light is on for you, sir,” Broussard replied.

Kelley nodded in approval. “Then get your soldiers ready. We jump into the Leonis system in five hours.”

Both majors saluted smartly and Kelley returned them.

“Major Broussard,” Kelly said as she turned to leave. “Wait a moment if you please.”

Broussard nodded to Hyun, who took his cue and marched on. “Yes sir?” she asked.

Kelley smiled. “How old are you, Major?”

Broussard smiled sheepishly. “Sir, I’m thirty nine.”

“You didn’t start out as a Marine though,” Kelley said crossing his arms. “How did you wind up doing this?”

Broussard chuckled. “Well sir, I was a professor of Language and Composition at Northwestern State University on Canceron.”

“A Demon, eh?” Kelly asked, cocking an eyebrow.

“Yes sir,” Broussard replied proudly. “I was on a sabbatical when the attack happened and was rescued by General Connors. He looked into my record and saw I’d served four years in the Colonial Marine Corps when I was young. He asked me to consider stepping up because he had a lot of young Marines but no experienced officers.”

Kelly nodded. “He told me that when we first met. So how did you wind up commanding a battalion?”

“Well, I started off as the operations officer under Major Hyun,” Broussard explained. “He was having a hard time getting his staff organized *and* running the day-to-day operations, so I stepped in and got things moving in the right direction for him. For that, he made me his X.O.”

“And when we had enough people to form a second battalion, he recommended you to command it,” Kelly concluded. “Both he and Connors speak highly of you, but how much combat experience do you have?”

“Not as much as you or Michael do,” Broussard admitted, “but I’ve seen my share.”

“These units of yours- most of the troops are green. How will they hold up once the rounds start flying?”

“As with all people, each according to their gifts,” Broussard replied thoughtfully. “They’ve had good training, though. Their officers and NCOs are experienced and they have courage.”

“That’s about all we can ask for nowadays,” Kelly said as he offered his hand. “Well major, now we’ll see how professors fight.”

She took his hand and shook it firmly. “We won’t let you down sir.”

CHAPTER 3

THE PATH BEFORE US

*Up ahead in the distance I shimmering light
My head grew heavy and my sight grew dim
I had to stop for the night.*

COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER BATTLESTAR CHALLENGER 50 YEARS ABL

“Sitrep,” Splashdown commanded as she entered the CIC of the *Challenger*.

“Two Dradis contacts, admiral,” Commander Klave reported. “One is the *Enterprise*.”

“The other?”

“No IFF transponder codes. In fact, she’s not emitting anything,” the commander said.

Splashdown studied the Dradis hologram floating above the situation table for a long moment. “Anything on visual?”

The commander touched a button. The Dradis image shrank down while a long range image of a storm-wracked gas giant with angry blue-gray swirling clouds appeared. “We can magnify, but only so much.”

The image shifted to a shadowy silhouette in the clouds of the upper atmosphere.

Splashdown stroked her chin thoughtfully. “Contact Commander Hohensee and tell her to launch a recon force to do a close flyby of that ship. Then have a Raptor prepared for launch. I’ll be transferring my flag to the *Enterprise* within the hour.”

“But Admiral, we can-”

“No,” Splashdown said firmly as she locked eyes with her daughter. “I don’t know what we’re going to find over there, and if this turns out to be some sort of trap, I don’t want us both caught in it.”

The commander shifted her gaze around the CIC to make sure no one was watching the exchange then stepped closer and dropped her voice. “Mother, this ship and her crew are more than capable of handling anything that may happen out here.”

Splashdown smiled proudly. “I know, commander. She’s got a good crew and a damn fine C.O., but if something bad happens and we’re too close together, well, it could be a bad day for Erin.”

The two women held each other’s gaze for a long moment before the commander nodded. “Very well, sir.”

“Thank you, Commander,” Splashdown said, placing a hand on her shoulder. “Hold station here until you get word from me.”

“We’ll keep the light on for you.”

“Jim.”

Realizing that he was dreaming again, Ryan looked around. He was somewhere inside the main causeway of the *Prometheus* which served as the primary highway of the ship for her crew.

“Attention aboard *Prometheus*,” the female voice of the ship’s V.I. announced suddenly. “Colonel Ryan, report to CIC. X.O. to the CIC, please.”

Heeding the call, Ryan found himself walking down a long corridor until he finally came to what the crew had called the grand staircase.

It lived up to its name as it was wide enough for ten people to walk down side by side. With handholds and rungs on the side of the bulkheads in case gravity failed, the staircase wound itself in sections from the bottom of the ship through her mid-decks, all the way to the top level where the gunnery and observation stations were located.

Feeling better than he had in years, Ryan made his way down the stairs to deck ten, also known as the command deck. From there, it was a short trip to the sliding doors that opened into the CIC.

“Logged: the executive officer has entered the CIC,” the V.I. announced.

“Jim, I’m glad you’re here.”

Ryan spun to find Turner standing next to him. “Admiral,” he breathed. “What’s going on?”

Turner smiled. “Something amazing, my friend, but there will be time for that later. Right now you need to prepare yourself.”

“For what?”

“The journey of a lifetime,” Turner said.

FLAG SUITE BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS COPERNICUS SYSTEM

Admiral Turner looked up from his list of reports at the sound of knuckles rapping against his door. Only one of his officers bothered to knock when there was a perfectly operational door chime so, leaning back in his chair and stretching his tired muscles out, he called out for her.

“Come in, Commander.”

The door slid open to reveal Commander Horvath with a folder of more paperwork under her arm. “Request permission to parlay with the commanding admiral,” she said with a smirk.

“If I have to sign one more of those,” Turner said, pointing to the paperwork, “I’m demoting you to ensign and putting you on detail scrubbing the launch tubes.”

Horvath smiled. “Then I better get a brush.”

Turner sighed. “Five years ago I was happy just to be promoted to commander and to get my own ship. How the hell did I wind up running this entire circus?”

Horvath sat down opposite him and placed the papers on his desk with a *thud*. “You *could* say that fate chose you to lead us through the dark times because you were the one best suited to the task.”

Turner arched a skeptical eyebrow but said nothing.

“Or,” Horvath continued with a sardonic smile, “You could say that you were the unlucky bastard in charge when the rest of humanity went to hell in a handbasket. Either way, you’re fraked.”

Turner scowled. “Has anyone ever called you pessimistic?”

“Me, sir? Never,” Horvath said as she leaned back. “In fact, I would say that I am the *soul* of optimism.”

“*Ha!*” Turner laughed. “And how, pray tell, do you define yourself as an optimist?”

“By the fact that I honestly believe that we’ll survive until tomorrow,” Horvath replied dryly. “Maybe even all the way until next week.”

“And you call *that* optimism?”

“Of course I do,” Horvath said leaning forward, “because if we go purely on the odds, we should be dead already. We’re not, and that’s due, in no small part, to your leadership.”

“Well, I—”

“Don’t sell yourself short, Admiral,” Horvath cut him off. “These people need you now more than ever now—”

The loud buzz of the intercom interrupted Horvath midsentence. “CIC for the commanding officer.”

Horvath smiled. “That’s you.”

“Not technically,” Turner argued.

Horvath reached over, picked up the handset and handed it to Turner. “No matter what you say, this is your ship until the day you die.”

Turner took the handset and smiled. “Let’s hope it’s a long command then. Turner here.”

The Fleet Admiral listened intently and nodded to himself before responding. “Understood. Contact the *Ares* and the *Pandora* and tell them to prepare to move. The Commander and I are en route to CIC now.”

Turner didn’t wait for a response. He handed the phone to Horvath who stood and hung it up. “Time?” she asked.

“The *Titan* just made entry interface with Leonis,” Turner said as he buttoned his uniform tunic. “Halloran and his team are about to insert into the station.”

“Then I guess it’s time,” Horvath replied.

Turner patted his X.O. on the back. “Once more, old friend.”

LANDRAM ALPHA SIX LANDING ZONE TAURUS

“Message from Hellfighter Six, sir,” said Corporal Dean Larson from the communications console of the Landram assault vehicle.

“What is it?” Colonel Kelley asked as the Landram jolted about from the rough road.

“Sir, Major Hyun reports that he’s made contact with a Cylon scouting party,” the corporal said as he read the de-coded printout. “He says that he engaged and destroyed them quickly, but feels confident that they were able to radio out before he could complete his attack.”

“Well, there goes our surprise party,” Kelly growled. “Tell Major Hyun to reinforce his lines and prepare to make a fighting withdrawal to phase line *Helios*.”

“Yes sir,” Larson said as he began to encode the message.

“Make sure he understands that I do *not* want him to force a major engagement unless it is absolutely unavoidable,” Kelley continued. “I want our forces up and concentrated in our defensive positions before we have to drop the hammer.”

Larson nodded and continued to type as Kelley turned to his digital map to study it. The terrain was represented in contour lines that were shaded as they would be on a standard military map. So far, he saw nothing that made him worry.

And then the Landram rocked as a massive explosion detonated next to it.

“What the frak was that?” the colonel demanded.

“Incoming!” the driver yelled back. “Cylon artillery fire coming from the northeast!”

“Damnation,” Kelley growled as he picked up a hand mic and set the radio to a general coded broadcast. “All stations this net, this is *Wolverine*: Execute case Red. I say again, execute case Red. Rendezvous at rally point *Kronos*. Respond.”

“Hellfighter Six, roger,” Major Hyun’s voice replied as another artillery blast rocked the vehicle.

“Tiger Six, roger,” came Major Broussards’ voice.

“Sir, I’m tracking two Landrams down,” Corporal Larson reported.

“We can’t do anything for them now,” Kelley replied. “Send to all vehicles: Push on to the rally point. Gods speed.”

CYLON COMMAND STATION IN ORBIT OF LEONIS

Allain Halloran refocused his digital feed as he scanned the corridors of the Cylon Resurrection Hub for enemy activity. Seeing none, he waved his team forward.

Despite the heavy battle armor they wore, the team moved quietly through the corridors passing open chambers and numerous doors without entering them. Finally they found a dark chamber that they could duck into.

“Map,” Halloran commanded.

Quickly, a digital pad was handed to him that displayed the current level of the complex.

“It’s nice to have some reliable intel,” said Petty Officer Kyler.

“I wouldn’t call *anything* given to us by the Cylons reliable,” Halloran said without taking his eyes from the tablet. “Senior?”

“Here, sir,” replied Senior Chief Ashley Lish as she moved to his side.

“I want to take this corridor here,” Halloran said, pointing to the display.

“That looks like a maintenance shaft,” the Senior Chief replied as she studied his tablet. “It’ll take some time to negotiate it.”

“Agreed, but it will also lessen our risk of making enemy contact too soon,” Halloran replied. “I’d rather not have to fight a whole station worth of Cylons *before* we get to our target.”

Lish nodded. “The maintenance shaft it is then. Kyler, you’re point. Charlie, you’ve got the thumper, so you’re in the two-slot. The Major is in three, Kelso is four, Crusher is five and I’ll bring up the rear.”

Halloran nodded his approval of the Senior Chief’s force distribution. “Questions?”

No one spoke.

“Okay then,” Halloran said picking up his weapon and stowing the tablet. “No speeches. Let’s get to work.”

Quickly and quietly the team moved out toward the maintenance shaft. They made it about one hundred meters when suddenly, alarms began to blare.

“Get to the access door *now*,” Halloran commanded quietly over their coded channel.

The team hustled as the heavy footfalls of Cylon Centurions approached. Reaching the maintenance door, Kyler popped it open and then lunged inside to clear it. After a long moment he reached out and gave a thumbs-up signal.

The rest of the team filed in quietly and sealed the door behind them, taking up defensive positions with guns aimed at the door.

The Centurions marching steps came closer and closer and Halloran was almost one hundred percent positive they were going to have to fight their way forward when the footfalls began to march away, their sounds fading as they moved down the corridor.

“Thank the Gods for lucky breaks,” Kyler said.

Halloran ignored the remark. “I don’t think that alarm was for us.”

“The fleet?” Lish asked.

“Too soon,” Halloran replied thoughtfully. “If I had to bet, I’d say that the landing on Leonis has started.”

“Then that means the fleet won’t be far behind and if we don’t get that weapon knocked out before they get here—” Lish said.

“It’ll be a real short fight,” Halloran concluded for her. “All right Senior, let’s move.”

“You heard the man,” Lish said as she pointed down the access shaft. “Assholes and elbows, people, let’s get going.”

RALLY POINT KRONOS LEONIS

Major Broussard stood atop her Landram and took in the landscape around her. Satisfied that her force was in their proper positions she began to scan for the rest of the rescue force as they made their way toward them.

It didn’t take her long to find them.

The convoy was kicking up a dust cloud the likes of which was rarely seen outside of desert sandstorms and was punctuated by explosions of dirt and dust from the Cylon artillery barrage that was chasing it.

“Captain Goree!” Broussard called out.

A moment later her adjutant, his uniform rumpled and his face earnest, appeared at her side. “Ma’am?”

“Contact the company commander and have them prepared for a passage of lines,” Broussard command. “Tell them to be ready to move on the bounce as soon as our friendlies make it through.”

“Yes ma’am,” Captain Goree replied with a salute.

Broussard waved him off and continued to scan the horizon with her viewfinder. “Corporal Jax: Any sign of our contacts?”

“Right behind you.”

Broussard spun to find a very dirty and disheveled Slider standing behind her. His face was covered with a scruffy beard and he looked like hell.

“Major Allen,” Broussard said, offering her hand.

“The one and only,” Slider replied.

“Major Amy Broussard, Colonial Marine Corps Second Battalion,” she said, introducing herself as they shook hands. “Have your people had enough of this shit hole?”

“Yeah,” Slider said, pointing to a small hill behind their position. “The advance party is waiting over there and we have five groups stacked up at check points reaching back about two clicks.”

Broussard nodded as her mind went to work. “Okay, get your people moving and inside our perimeter as quickly as you can and have the ones who are able to fight take up a reserve position at the center.”

“We can do that,” Slider responded turning to a skinny boy who looked to be no more than sixteen. “Alex, have the groups start moving up as fast as they can.”

“Got it,” the boy replied taking out a small radio. “All stations, execute operation *Howling Rock*.”

Broussard cocked an eyebrow. “*Howling Rock*?”

Slider grinned. “Yeah, it was *his* idea.”

“The kid’s?”

Slider looked back at Alex who was issuing commands into his radio firmly and efficiently. “He’s young but he’s no kid. He’s been leading this group since the attack.”

Broussard studied the young man for a moment. “He must have some extraordinary leadership qualities.”

“He *does*,” Slider replied as Alex turned and approached him.

“All groups are on the move,” the young man reported. “Scouts say the Cylons have three battalion sized elements moving behind a wall of advancing artillery fire.”

Slider nodded. "I figured they would do this. They're trying to box us in and cut us off from the LZ."

"Boy, are *they* in for a surprise," Alex said with a smirk.

Slider nodded. "Major Broussard, allow me to introduce the leader of our civilian contingent, Mister Alex Turner."

Broussard's eyes went wide with surprise. "This is...?"

"Yep," Slider replied proudly. "This is the reason these people have stayed alive this long. He's a good leader, even if he *is* stubborn and bullheaded at times."

The major extended her hand. "Good to meet you, Mister Turner. Your father sends his compliments on a job well done."

Turner nodded. "Thanks, but we can save the warm fuzzies for later. I've got sick and wounded who need to get the hell out of here."

Broussard smiled at his brusque-like nature. "Straight to business. I like that," she said as she looked past him. "Doctor Fairfield! We have wounded coming in. Treat them as best you can and prep them for evac."

"Yes sir," the doctor replied as she directed her medics to work.

"I'll see that they get settled," Alex said as he started to turn away.

"Not so fast, young man," Broussard said. "I have something for you."

"Don't tell me it's an *I love you son* note from my dad," Alex scowled. "I don't need that right now."

Broussard shook her head and handed the boy two golden arrow shaped pins. "These are yours."

Alex looked at them for a moment before looking back at her. "These are lieutenants' rank pins."

"I see that your years in the Junior Cadet Corps weren't wasted," Slider quipped.

Alex scowled at the insignia for a moment. "I didn't ask for these."

"I know," Slider replied. "*I did.*"

Alex turned to him. "Why?"

“Your dad and I had a discussion about two years ago,” Slider explained. “He said you two had drifted apart because of the divorce and because he didn’t get to see you all that often.”

“Sounds about right,” Alex replied. “What does that have to do with *these*?”

“Your dad said that the last time you had spoken, you told him you didn’t want to be a fleet officer,” Slider said.

A fog came over Alex’s eyes as he remembered the conversation. “We argued the last time we spoke. I told him I wanted to join the CMC because I didn’t want to be like him.”

“He was proud of you for that,” Slider said as he took the rank pins from Alex’s hand. “He told me that he was happy because you were following your own path, not his.”

Alex smiled. “Yeah, that sounds like him.”

“You’ve *earned* these, kid,” Slider said as he and Broussard pinned the rank on Alex’s collar. “Major, the orders?”

Broussard produced a document from her pocket and began to read. “The Fleet Admiral has bestowed upon Alexander Franklin Turner a field commission of second lieutenant in the Colonial Marine Corps with all of the rights, responsibilities and privileges thereto, for his heroic leadership, service and actions during a time of war. This rank will become permanent upon his completion of Colonial Officer Basic Training. Signed- Jonathan Turner, Fleet Admiral, Commanding.”

“Congratulations, Lieutenant Turner,” Broussard said rendering a salute.

Turner returned the salute and stood to attention. “What are my orders, sir?”

Broussard folded her arms across her chest. “Get your wounded to the doc,” she said. “Then get the reserve force coordinated and armed. We brought a few spare rifles with us along with ammo so you should be good to go.”

“Understood,” the new lieutenant replied. “Anything else?”

“Yeah,” the major replied. “How did you come up with the name *Howling Rock*?”

“It’s from a novel I read as I child,” Turner explained with a wistful smile, “about a group of freedom fighters on a desert planet hiding a disgraced noble from a sick and twisted baron who answered to an evil galactic emperor. The line says *when the find this place there must be nothing left but the wind howling through the rocks*. I felt it was appropriate.”

CHAPTER 4

FULCRUM

*I close my eyes,
Only for a moment then the moment's gone.
All my dreams,
Pass before my eyes with curiosity.*

**SHUTTLE 2699
SECTOR 1701
RAGNAR SYSTEM
50 YEARS ABL**

“Shuttle two-six-niner-niner, this is *Enterprise*,” the garbled voice on the loudspeaker said. “Our Raptor flyby showed no signs of power or any sort of activity from the target vessel. Recommend that you board with flight suits on.”

“Understood,” Splashdown said from her seat next to Ryan. “We’re going to approach the portside flight pod and attempt entry there.”

“Roger that, Admiral,” replied the voice of Commander Rose Hohensee. “Just be careful.”

Splashdown smiled but made no reply. Outside the shuttle, gas clouds whipped by as the vehicle descended into the upper atmosphere of the Ragnar gas giant.

“Why didn’t you ever promote her to fleet command?” Ryan asked.

“Are you kidding?” Splashdown replied with an expression of disbelief. “I’ve offered it to her three fraking times and each time she threatened to retire if I promoted her.”

Ryan chuckled. “Her father was the same way, according to the history books.”

Splashdown smiled, remembering the young woman who had flown at her side so many times. “She’s content to command the *Enterprise*. She told me that

once she gets too old to do it right anymore, she'll step down and retire but she'll be damned if she'll let me wrangle her into a desk job."

"Well," Ryan said with a shrug, "if she's happy..."

His voice trailed off suddenly and a blank expression came to his face.

"Jim?"

Suddenly an alarm began to sound throughout the ship.

"Proximity alarm!" the pilot shouted.

"I don't see anything," his co-pilot replied. "Dradis is static!"

"All back full!"

The shuttle vibrated and shook as if she were in the hand of some celestial child who was tossing it about. Splashdown looked to the front canopy to see the clouds parting and the immense vision of a Battlestar flight pod in front of them.

Beside her, James Ryan gasped and smiled. "We're here."

She continued to stare at him incredulously. He had been in a daze, his eyes fixed on the bulkhead in front of them both. There was no way he could know.

Yet in front of her eyes, lights suddenly blazed to life. Starting from the front of the ship and working back to the stern, it was as if someone had suddenly begun flipping all of the switches on, one after the other.

And then the name lit up.

"Oh my gods," she breathed, "it really *is* her."

Ryan placed his hand on her arm and she found him smiling with tears in his eyes. "We have to go aboard her."

"I know, Jim but—"

"No, we have to go aboard *now*," Ryan said.

"Why Jim? Why do we have to go now?"

Ryan looked out the front window, his eyes lost to the scene before him.

"Because he's there," he said turning back to her with a smile. "And he's waiting for me."

**COMBAT INFORMATION CENTER
BATTLESTAR PROMETHEUS
COPERNICUS SYSTEM**

“Sir, the fleet is assembled and ready to jump,” Commander Horvath reported from her station.

“Thank you, Commander,” Turner said as he picked up his headset. “Maddie, patch me through to the fleet.”

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

“This is your admiral,” Turner began. “We’ve just received word that the first two phases of our operation have begun. As I speak, our task force is now on Leonis effecting the rescue of the resistance fighters and prisoners of war there. Now it’s our turn.”

Turner looked around the CIC and saw grim determination in the faces of his crew. It made his heart swell with a bittersweet pride, knowing that some of them would not return.

“I won’t lie to you: We’re laying it all on the line here. We are meeting the enemy head on and the odds are not in our favor, but we don’t have a choice. If the Cylons get their new station fully operational, they will have a way to download into bodies that are unrecognizable to us and will be able to change their appearance whenever it suits them. If that happens, it is only a matter of time before they infiltrate and destroye us.”

“Our Cylon allies will depart shortly to begin phase three of our plan. We will jump shortly thereafter,” Turner explained. “Know this: *everything* depends on our actions today. The choice is simple: We win, or we die.”

The admiral took a deep breath and, one last time, he calmed his soul as he prepared to send good men and women into harm’s way. “All commands- start your jump clocks and good hunting.”

“Task Force One: ten seconds to combat jump,” Maddie announced.

“Acknowledged,” Jezebel’s voice replied. “God speed.”

On the Dradis screen the three Cylon Basestars winked out of existence as they jumped away.

“Task Force Two: Five minutes until combat jump,” Maddie said.

“Understood,” the voice of Rollo Thomasi replied. “*Victoria vel mortis!*”

“Yeah,” Turner said to Horvath with a sly grin, “what *he* said.”

Horvath chuckled. “FTL drives are spun up and your flagship is at condition one.”

“Very well,” Turner replied. “Maddie?”

The Master Chief nodded. “Task Force Three: Seven minutes until combat jump.”

“Understood,” replied the voice of Admiral Ryan. “We’ll see you at the party when the fight’s over. Unless the Cylons vape us, that is.”

Turner smiled at Ryan’s eternal sarcasm. “First round is on me,” he said into his headset.

“Free drinks? In that case, damn the Cylons, I’m gonna *live*,” Ryan replied.

CYLON COMMAND STATION IN ORBIT OF LEONIS

“Three Base Ships have jumped into close orbit,” Simon reported as he scanned the space around the station. “I’m receiving transponder codes now.”

“Is it our three little lost sheep?” Lucifer asked, his arms folded across his chest.

Simon smiled. “Yes.”

Lucifer and Bane exchanged glances. “Open a channel to them,” Lucifer commanded.

Static came over the loudspeakers for a moment, followed by a sudden squeak as the line established itself, but finally, after a long moment a familiar voice answered. “Hello, brother.”

Lucifer cocked an eyebrow. “Hello Jezebel. You sound awfully good, for a dead girl.”

“Well, the rumors of my death have been exaggerated,” Jez replied.

“Be that as it may, I’m kind of busy here,” Lucifer said. “Would you kindly state your intentions and explain to me where you’ve been keeping three of my basestars?”

Jez chuckled. “Why brother, I’m here to deliver humanity into your hands.”

“Oh really?” Lucifer said turning to Bane who smiled. “And just how do you intend to do that?”

“I’m sure you’re aware of the little skirmish going on planetside, yes?” Jez asked.

“Of course,” Lucifer replied indignantly. “We’re sending a massive force to deal with them.”

“Call them back,” Jez said. “That operation is just a distraction. The real attack will be coming in just a few minutes. The Colonials are going to throw everything they have at you.”

“Ah,” Lucifer said. “And you know this *how*?”

“Because I convinced Turner that I was on his side,” Jez said proudly. “They believe that I am the first wave of an attack against you.”

“I see,” Lucifer said, frowning his brows in concentration. “And what is your marvelous plan for all of this?”

Bane could almost see Jez smile proudly through the voice line as she explained her plan. “I will jump back to their home world once you engage them and nuke their planet into oblivion. Between the two of us, we can wipe humanity out once and for all.”

Lucifer nodded. “That’s a good plan but we won’t need it.”

“And why is that?” Jez asked.

Now Bane smiled, his face a rictus grin of malice and evil, as Lucifer spoke.

“Because we don’t *need* your help,” Lucifer said. “We already know what Turner is doing. We’ve been monitoring his communications for a while now and we have a spy on his ship. We know that in approximately two minutes, the Alliance fleet will jump in, followed by the Colonials.”

“And what do you plan to do about it, then?”

“Oh, we have a plan,” Lucifer said with a smile. “A plan that *doesn't* include you or your followers.”

“For Gods' sake, why?” Jez demanded. “We can help you!”

“Yes, we could use the help,” Lucifer conceded. “But the truth is that I don't trust you, don't like you and don't want you.”

“We have a weapons lock,” Simon announced quietly.

Bane nodded. “Charge the weapon.”

“What are you doing!?” Jez demanded, panic creeping into her voice.

“Taking care of unfinished business,” Lucifer said as he gestured to Simon.

In space, sparks began to dance around a large emitter dish and the faint mark of a targeting laser began to show against the core section of Jez's Basestar.

Inside of the station the power flickered as the energy core discharged a massive burst of electromagnetic energy that ran at the speed of light along conductor paths to the discharge dish where it followed a conductor laser through space to the point where it could ground out-

The power core of Jez' Basestar.

The resulting surge of energy flashed through the ship, instantly killing the hybrid and frying every piece of electronic equipment inside. Fuel conduits exploded because of the back feed of plasma energy flowing through them. The ship began to list as Leonis' gravity took hold of it and began to pull it into its deadly embrace.

The Basestar was dead as it began to drift toward the planet that would ensure its doom. Aboard, anyone still alive would follow her to the grave.

“The other two ships are spinning up their FTL drives,” Simon reported.

Lucifer smiled. “Recycle the plasma rotors and fire on them as well.”

“But surely they will surrender now that Jez is dead?” Simon protested.

“I don’t care,” Lucifer retorted, his eyes blazing. “There is only one order in the new Cylon Empire- *mine*. Get with it or follow her example.”

Simon locked eyes with Lucifer, a man he had respected and admired until now, and bowed his head in acquiescence. “By your command.”

Lucifer nodded approvingly and turned to Bane. “Now,” he said clapping his hands together, “let’s finish off the appetizers. The main course will be here shortly and I don’t want to miss it.”

BONUS

The Future

OPERATION LIGHT BRINGER HQ
LOCATION CLASSIFIED
SOMEWHERE IN NORTH AMERICA
APRIL 17TH, 2011

Doctor Albert Parker rubbed his weary eyes as his partner, Karen Thayer, entered the room from behind. She had been gone investigating possible caches for four weeks and, since any sort of communications regarding the project were strictly forbidden, she didn't know about his recent discoveries.

Spinning in his chair he smiled as she walked across the room. "Welcome home, weary traveler."

"Thanks," Thayer replied as she made her way to the coffee machine.

Parker leaned back in his chair and continued to smile as she poured herself a cup. "Oh god, I need this. I've been up for three days straight trying to find some way into the—"

She noticed his smile.

"What's going on?"

"What's going on is I have stumbled onto a clue," Parker said proudly. "And while watching some hack of a documentary on the Sy-Fy channel too."

Thayer snorted derisively. "You mean they still show quality television on there?"

"I wouldn't call it *quality*," Parker shrugged. "But it's better than the stupid B movies and idiotic wrestling that they mostly show now."

“Aw, whats the matter, doc?” Thayer quipped with a smirk. “*Dinogator vs. The Volcanic Tornado Quake* isn’t your style of movie?”

“Hardly,” Parker replied drily. “But that’s beside the point. The point is that while watching a documentary on the Mayan calendar and their predicted end of days, I discovered something.”

“Really?” Thayer said rolling her eyes as Parker began to lay out documents for her to see. “Now you’re buying into the Mayan calendar? They didn’t predict the Spanish coming so how the hell could they miss *that* but get the end of the world right?”

“Just shut up and look,” Parker replied pointing to a photo of a Mayan calendar carving. “In the center there, do you see it?”

Thayer looked close and, to her surprise, she did.

“That,” she started before catching her breath. “That *can’t* be.”

“It *is*,” Parker said with a smile. “I’ve been translating all of these videos and texts and *that*, my dear, is the symbol for a world they called Kobil.”

“It is,” Thayer breathed.

Suddenly, Thayer’s demeanor changed. Whereas before she was pretty, quiet and even diminutive at times, now she stood tall, almost like a warrior.

“I guess it’s time,” she said.

“Time for what?” Parker asked as he searched his desk for other documents.

“The truth,” Thayer said.

Finding the document, Parker turned back to Thayer, oblivious to her changed demeanor. “The truth about what?”

“The truth about *you*,” Thayer replied with a smile. “It’s time for you to know everything but you better take a seat because this will take a while.”

“What do you mean?” Parker asked, confused.

“*Sit down Albert,*” Thayer snapped and Parker found himself sitting in his chair, stunned by the power of her voice.

“O-okay,” Parker stammered. “I’m sitting, now what?”

Thayer took a deep breath and steadied herself. “It starts like this- Life here, began out there....”