



PROLOGUE

NEW DISCOVERIES

She was beautiful. That was the only way to describe her. Shoulder length platinum blonde hair, long slender yet shapely legs and a body that most women would kill for. Yes, beautiful was an accurate word for her.

She looked around the Pahn City Spaceport on Leonon with the curious eyes of someone who had never been there. Most of those who saw her simply dismissed her as a tourist.

If only they knew the truth She thought.

Even though she had studied the Colonies all of her life, this was her first time actually being around humans. It was a curious experience for her but not overwhelming. Her brothers and sisters had prepared her well for her mission to the Colonies.

Here on Leonon she would learn about human nature upfront. Here she would learn about how to seduce one and manipulate him to do whatever she wished. And once she was done, she would return to her brothers and sisters. By then a decision will have been made about the fate of those whom she now walked among.

Then, her real mission would begin.

Ships Status Report, Battlestar Prometheus. It's been just over six months since we set out on our journey and so far, so good. The few injuries sustained on Kobol have been mostly healed, although Captain Percival isn't very happy about her new job as intell officer. I plan to put her back on reserve flight status so as to keep her skills sharp though. That should make her happy.

We've made good progress along the route that Doctors Zylman and Creighton have given us. We generally make about four jumps a day but today we are stopping in the system we have designated S-171 to do some upkeep on the engine systems and generally give our guys a break.

The crew has worked hard and surpassed all of my expectations. I intend to recommend several officers for promotion as soon as...

“Dradis contact!” Lieutenant Allain Halloran announced, interrupting Commander Turner as he typed out his log entry.

Instantly, Colonel James Ryan, the X.O. of the ship, was at his side over looking the operations station. “Where?” the colonel asked.

“Bearing three seven one karem oh seven six. Range: three thousand kilometers.” Halloran reported.

“Action stations!” Said Ryan.

Immediately, the alarm klaxons began to sound across the ship signaling everyone to man their posts for battle.

“Why didn't the J.P.D.S. pick it up?” Commander Turner asked as he studied the dradis readout.

“The J.P.D.S. picked up a weak energy signature but determined it was background radiation.” Said Master Chief Palmer from his station behind the helm.

The Jump Point Detection System was a new innovation aboard Nova class Battlestars. It detected the energy build up that occurred before a ship jumped in and plotted its position so that there were no surprises, like the ones Commander Turner and crew were experiencing now.

“Is the contact maneuvering?” Turner asked.

“No sir, contact is stationary.” Halloran replied.

“X.O., send the CAP in and launch the alert fighters.” Turner commanded. “Have the Sentinel come on station to provide support if necessary.”

“Yes sir.” Colonel Ryan replied, turning to the Com NCO, Petty Officer first Class Theresa Madrid. “Send to Major Horvath: Close with and identify the enemy. Weapons hold.”

“Aye sir.” Madrid replied activating her headset. “Ice Queen, Prometheus. Bogey contact, bearing three seven one karem oh seven six. Close with and I.D. the bogey, weapons hold. I say again, weapons hold.”

“Prometheus, Ice Queen three two four, acknowledge orders. Time to intercept: thirty seconds.” Came the voice of the CAG, Karla Horvath.

“Now we wait.” Ryan said to Turner as he joined the commander by the situation table.

“Yep.” Turner replied nodding slightly. “Now we wait.”

“Sir, all stations report condition one set.” Halloran reported from the operations station.

“Very well.” Turner replied.

“Prometheus, Ice Queen.” Came Horvath’s voice. “We’ve closed on the bogey but I’ve never seen anything like it before. We may be looking at an alien ship sir.”

“Alien?” Ryan said casting a glance at Turner.

“Ice Queen, Prometheus actual. What’s it doing?” Turner asked picking up his handset.

“Nothing sir, it looks pretty tore up. It might be disabled.” Horvath’s reply came back.

“Keep an eye on it. If it does anything hostile blow it out of the sky.” Turner ordered.

“Wilco.” Was Horvath’s reply.

Turner turned to the X.O. “Launch two Raptors and have them tow it into the starboard flight pod. Have a squad of marines meet me down there ready to board the ship.”

“Yes sir.” Ryan replied.

CHAPTER 1

IN THE KNOW

“Nat! I finally found out!” said Matthew Campagna as he burst through Nat Tubanos’ open office door.

“Damn it Matt you scared the hell out of me!” Nat snapped as she took a deep breath to calm her racing heart. “What are you raving about now?”

“I found about someone who is in the know about the Prometheus mission and you will never guess who it is!” Mat replied, his exuberance radiating from him like fire.

“Prometheus again?” Nat said shaking her head, “I thought you gave up on that story last month.”

“I did but I got some new information from a source close to the President.” Matt said with a mischievous smile.

“So who is this person who is this person that’s *in the know*?” Nat said sarcastically.

“Gaius Baltar!” Matt replied, barely able to contain his enthusiasm.

“Oh great.” Nat said rolling her eyes. “Another of your obsessions that you haven’t been able to realize.”

“I’m going to try and get an interview with him Nat.” Matt said.

“Matt, the man has turned down your interview requests three times now. What is so great about this guy that you go ape shit over?” Nat asked.

“He’s the most brilliant man in the Colonies Nat, that’s why.” Matt replied. “Now I just have to figure out a way to get an interview and get the information out of him.”

Nat chuckled. “Well good luck with that one cowboy.” She said.

“You think you could do better?” Matt asked smugly.

Nat favored her partner with an evil grin. “I have my ways.”

“Ok then hot shot,” Matt replied with his own smile, “If I land the Baltar interview, you have to take my place on the Arelon trip next month.”

“Eww!” Nat exclaimed, “I hate farm trips.”

“Well then don’t take the bet since you’ll probably wind up losing.” Matt replied smugly.

“Oh frack that!” Nat said standing. “I’ll take your bet, but if I win you can’t speak of Gaius fracking Baltar or the Prometheus story for a whole year.”

Matt considered her wager for a moment then smiled. “Done. He said shaking her hand. “Who ever lands the Prometheus information from Baltar wins.”

“Agreed.” Nat replied.

Matt turned and left Nat’s office and she watched him go. He was confident that he would land his victory but she knew something about Gaius Baltar that Matt didn’t and it gave her an advantage.

She realized that some reporters would balk at using their bodies to get an important story. Of course, she had no compunctions. After all, she had gotten to be the co-host of the most famous morning news broadcast in the colonies in much the same manner.

Whatever it takes to win. She told herself.

“Report.” Turner commanded as he strode into the starboard hangar bay.

“We entered the ship and found two people sir, one human and one... not.” Said Gunnery Sergeant Shugart, the lead Marine on the boarding party, reported.

Both Turner and Ryan were brought up short by the enlister Marine’s response, although it was Ryan who found his voice first. “Define ‘not’, Gunny.” The X.O. said.

“Well sir...” the Gunny said with a perplexed expression on his face, “Maybe you should see for yourself.”

Turner and Ryan exchanged a questioning look and then followed as the senior Marine led the way into the access hatch on the side of the ship.

“Definitely not Colonial.” Ryan observed.

Turner nodded but said nothing as they made their way inside the cramped corridors of the ship. After several moments, Turner and Ryan came face to face with a situation that neither of them expected.

“I don’t think any class at the academy ever covered *this*.” Ryan said.

Standing in front of them in what was obviously the cockpit of the ship was a six foot tall bipedal humanoid with insect-like features that was wearing a tattered jumpsuit and brandishing a long metal pole.

And it wasn't happy.

Turner winced as the creature let loose with a high pitched screeching sound while simultaneously waving the pole at the encroaching Marines.

"Stun him." Turner said to the nearest Marine.

The Marine nodded, only too happy to comply. He raised his weapon and a dart fired from the barrel sticking into the creature's arm. The creature looked at the dart with what Turner approximated was incredulity and then looked back at Turner.

That's when the stun charge in the dart went off.

Non-lethal electricity coursed through the creatures' body causing it to shake and convulse before finally falling to the ground unconscious. Only after it fell down did the others see the human behind it in what looked to be the pilot's chair. He too was unconscious with a gash in his head that was bleeding profusely.

"Take that thing to the brig." Turner commanded pointing at the alien "And get him down to sick bay but keep an armed guard on him."

"Yes sir." Shugart replied.

Turner and Ryan walked out from the ship and back into the hangar bay. Once there the commander said "Have Chief Palmer and Major Argyle get a look at this ship. I want to know its purpose, capabilities, weapons, the whole bit."

"Yes sir." Ryan replied. "This ought to make for an interesting report back to Picon."

Turner chuckled, shaking his head. "You, my friend, are the master of understatement."

"Pass the word around the ship: Captain Percival, report to the starboard hangar deck. I say again, Captain Percival, report to the starboard hangar deck."

Captain Stacie Percival, the Prometheus' intelligence officer, was just about to slide back into her bunk from the previous actions stations call when she heard the voice of P.O. Madrid call out her name over the intercom. Immediately up and out of her bunk

before the second call could be completed. Throwing on her uniform tunic as reached her com handset and pressed the button for C.I.C.

“Combat.” Answered the voice of Lieutenant Allain Halloran.

“This is Captain Percival, what’s going on?” Stacie asked.

“Colonel Ryan needs you down in the starboard hangar bay ma’am. Wants you to do a threat assessment on the unidentified ship we just brought in.” Halloran replied.

“I’m on my way then.” Stacie replied, hanging up the handset.

It didn’t take long for Percival to reach the hangar bay but when she did she was shocked. The deck gang was all over the ship taking pictures and laughing like the ship was a trophy.

“Chief Watts!” Stacie barked out.

David Watts, the chief of the starboard deck, turned away from the Viper he was inspecting and caught sight of his deck gang. Immediately his face turned sour.

“Yes ma’am?” the chief said coming to a halt and snapping a salute in front of Stacie.

Stacie returned the salute and gestured to the crewmen on the ship. “Get your knuckle draggers down off that ship and let’s see if we can’t figure out what she can do.”

Watts nodded and turned to the deck gang. “HEY!” He barked at the top of his voice, “Get your fracking asses down off that ship and stand to over here NOW!”

The deck gang, who had been fooling around and laughing a moment before, all stopped what they were doing and slowly made their way down to where the chief and Stacie awaited them.

“That’s right, just take your time.” The chief said sarcastically. “Get over here now!”

The crew moved with purpose now as the Chief’s temper began to show. All seven crewmen lined up at perfect attention as the Chief walked down the line slowly, scowling at each one of them.

“You are a sorry excuse for a deck gang.” The non-com growled. “I have a senior officer here trying to do a job and you guys are climbing all over this ship like fracking monkeys in a zoo!”

“You have embarrassed me and this entire deck crew.” He snarled, adopting a sinister smile. “And now you get to pay for it.”

The faces on the deck gang all fell as Stacie stepped forward to address them. “I want this ship inspected from top to bottom for damage. After that, I want an assessment of its weapons capabilities and after *that* I want to know this ships’ engine capabilities.”

“That will take all fracking night!” one of the crewmen protested.

“That’s right!” the Chief snapped, “And if you guys hadn’t been acting like complete asses up there I might have shifted you out but since you all have all that excess energy, you can put it to good use. No one goes off shift until the job is done.”

Stacie looked over the glowering crewmen for a moment. By the expressions on their faces she knew that for the moment, she was public enemy number one in the eyes of these crewmen. It would make working with them over the next couple of days interesting to say the least. “Dismissed.” She said finally.

Slowly the crewmen dispersed, muttering darkly as they went. Stacie turned to the chief and smiled. “You’re an evil bastard chief.” She said

Watts’ expression remained stony as he watched the crewmen go. “It’s my job to be a bastard ma’am. I get nice, they get sloppy, someone gets dead.”

Stacie nodded understanding his point and took out her notepad. “Ok, I guess I’ll start with the weapons. Thanks chief.”

“No problem ma’am, I’ll be over here working on a Viper if you need me.” Chief Watts said as he turned and walked back towards the other side of the bay.

Stacie watched him go and then cast her gaze on the foreign looking ship. *Ok, she thought to herself, Lets see what secrets you’re hiding.*

Doctor Lucian Zylman entered his lab to find his new colleague, Doctor Hal Creighton, pouring over some notes that he had taken the earlier day.

“Any luck?” Zylman asked.

Startled, Creighton shot upright and adopted a fighting stance before recognizing who it was who had entered the room. Slowly, the doctor relaxed his stance and took a deep steadying breath.

“My gods Lucian you startled the hell out of me!” he said exhaling strongly.

“Apologies Hal, I didn’t mean to.” Zylman replied.

Hal held up his hand, waving off the apology. “No need friend.” He said, “It’s just that my experience with those men back on Kobil…” he broke off allowing his voice to crack slightly.

Zylman nodded understandingly. “I sympathize with you friend. What you experienced was terrible. I can’t even begin to fathom it.”

Creighton smiled weakly as he attempted a brave face. “That which does not kill me eh?”

Zylman nodded. “Indeed. So what have you discovered?”

The change of subject seemed to energize Creighton whose demeanor immediately brightened as he walked towards Zylman. “I was reading the scrolls and I found one here referring to ‘The Exiles’ of the 13th tribe.”

“Yes,” Zylman said nodding, “The only references I was ever able to find regarding them are in obscure passages that have not found their way into the more recent publications of the ancient texts.”

“I wonder why that is?” Creighton asked curiously.

Zylman chuckled. “You know how fickle the Scribes and Oracles on Geminon can be.” He said with a tone of contempt, “Whenever they discover something that doesn’t flow with the established religious doctrine, it’s denounced as heresy or just totally swept under the rug.”

“You make it sound like an evil conspiracy.” Creighton chuckled.

“It is in some ways.” Zylman replied taking a seat at his desk. “You’ll have to forgive me Hal, but I have a very dim view of the religious establishment.”

“You see, I was actually studying to be a priest as a teen.” Zylman said as Hal sat down across from him. “I grew up in the Athenian sect on Caprica. Believed every word that my Priest told me, in fact. I was in awe of the wonders of the gods.”

“But something happened to change that?” Creighton asked.

“Indeed.” Zylman replied with a rueful expression. “I was so inspired by what I was told that I began to research many of the ancient texts on my own. It was only then that I discovered the layers of hypocrisy and outright lies that the religious establishment has perpetuated throughout the centuries to keep themselves in power.”

Creighton nodded. "A wise man once said that religion, like war, was one of the great tools of power and statecraft."

"That wise man was correct." Zylman replied. "I mean, when you look back through the history of the colonies, religion has started more wars than anything else in our history and the sad thing is that we all believe in the same gods!"

"Of course it's the interpretation of those gods and what they supposedly have to say that usually starts conflicts." Creighton said.

"Exactly!" Zylman replied, his face aglow with enthusiasm. "Look at our history! We weren't even a totally unified people until the Cylon War started. We were just a loose confederation of member worlds and their subject colonies until the Cylons turned against us. And why did they turn you ask? Because we had been using them to fight our wars for us!"

Creighton nodded understandingly. "You're preaching to the choir here my friend. I too am not a fan of organized religion. I believe that the religious establishment is nothing more than a tool for ambitious men to gain power over those who would normally not even listen to them."

"So say we all." Zylman replied with a smile.

The room was quiet for a moment before Zylman picked up his papers and said "Well now that I have done my preaching for the day, what say we look into this curious reference you have."

"Sounds like a plan." Creighton replied with a smile. *I think I may have found myself an ally after all.* He thought to himself. *Still, only time will tell.*

CHAPTER 2

THE LOST ONES

Lucas Verenos started awake to find himself surrounded by strange men wearing black and blue uniforms. Darting his eyes left and right he found no way to escape and he came to one inescapable conclusion:

His luck had finally run out.

As he cast his eyes around the room he could see that nobody had yet noticed that he was awake. Realizing quickly that it was better that they thought him still asleep, he closed his eyes to bare slits so that he could still see and he opened up his hearing senses and listened to what was going on around him.

A young man with blonde hair wearing a dark blue uniform was addressing another, darker skinned man who seemed to be in authority over him.

“The creature is awake now sir.” He heard the blonde man report. “It’s not acting violent but it is definitely tense inside the cage.”

The darker skinned man nodded. “Have you figured out a way to communicate with it yet?” he asked.

“No sir.” The blonde man replied. “We’ve been looking for anything we could find inside their ship that might help but nothing so far.”

“What about the ship itself?” The dark skinned man asked.

“Captain Percival has had a deck gang crawling all over her for 24 hours straight sir. She says she should be able to get a report to us by the end of the day.” The blonde man replied.

“Good,” said the dark skinned man. “Now if only we could get some information out of that creature in the brig. It would be a huge help to us.”

“Yes sir,” the blonde man agreed, “But right now we can’t understand a thing it says so I don’t know how much valuable information we will get out of it.”

The dark skinned man rubbed his eyes wearily. “Right now I’d just settle for it’s name.”

“Squeaky.”

Turner and Ryan’s head snapped around to see that the human from the ship had opened his eyes and was watching them intently.

“What did you say?” Turner asked.

“I said,” Lucas said hoarsely, “That his name is Squeaky.”

Turner cast a glance at his X.O. and then approached the man lying in the hospital bed. “Welcome back to the world.” He said by way of greeting.

Lucas nodded weakly. “Thank you.” He said. “Where am I?”

“You’re aboard the Battlestar Prometheus.” Turner replied. “I’m Commander Turner, this is Colonel Ryan.”

“What’s a Battlestar?” Lucas asked. “Is that like a Battle Cruiser?”

This prompted another exchanged look between Turner and Ryan.

“Something like that.” Ryan said.

“What can you tell us about yourself?” Turner asked.

“What do you want to know?” Lucas asked.

“How about your name?” Ryan asked from behind Turner.

“Lucas.” The man in the bed replied. “I’m the captain of the Jade Phoenix, the ship you captured.”

Turner nodded. “We didn’t capture you. We found you adrift.”

Suddenly Lucas’ expression changed, like a light had gone off inside his head. “You’re... not from the Alliance are you?”

Turner’s expression became confused. “The Alliance? What’s that?”

“Wait a second, you’re human, you speak Kobolic and you say don’t know what the Alliance is?” Lucas asked incredulously. “Come on, stop feeding me feldercarp.”

“I have no idea what feldercarp is,” Turner said, “But I assure you, we have no idea what this Alliance you’re asking about is.”

“Holy name of Jupiter!” Lucas gasped, “If you speak Kobolic, and you’re human...”

“Yes?” Turner prompted.

“I swear,” Lucas said with anxious laughter, “I never believed any of the stories I had heard about you people! But now...”

“Now what?” asked an impatient Ryan.

“Now you’re here. You guys...” Lucas said with awe. “You’re the lost children of Kobol.”

The number 8 Cylon model stood facing the direction that she knew the blast would come from and tried to keep her composure. To the two Cylons who stood beside her, a six and the one known as Leoben, she looked like the epitome of calm serenity.

Inside however was a different story.

“Are you sure you want to go through with this little sister?” The six was asking her as Leoben looked on with a compassionate expression.

“Yes.” She lied. “I have no fear of death.”

“Good,” Said Leoben as he placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. “The resurrection ship is in orbit now. In a couple of hours you’ll wake up in a new body.”

The 8 model smiled weakly. “You should go.” She said.

Six and Leoben looked at each other and nodded their agreement.

“We’ll be waiting for you on the other side little sister.” Six said, but the 8 had already turned her back.

Walking together in silence, Leoben and Six made their way into the Cylon transport and closed its doors.

“She’s terrified.” Leoben commented flatly.

“Can you blame her?” Six said, her voice edged with sympathy. “She’s about to be killed by a nuclear blast and we have absolutely no idea what will happen to her consciousness once it happens.”

Leoben nodded as he felt the ship beneath them take flight. “It’s all in gods hand now.” He said quietly.

Back on the surface, a soft chilling wind began to blow around the number 8 Cylons’ feet, stirring the dark robe that she had dressed herself in.

Closing her eyes she listened as the transport lifted off and rose into the sky. When she could finally hear it no longer, she knelt down in the tall soft grass and put her hands together.

“God of the heavens hear the prayer of your servant.” She said. “Grant me thy pardon, oh lord, for any trespasses I may have committed against thee. Bless me with thy strength so that I may see this through without fear and bestow upon me thy grace so that I may one day serve you again.”

As the last words escaped her lips a soft rumble began in the distance. With her eyes closed tightly she could not see the flash that accompanied the sound, nor could she see the enormous wave of fiery energy that was sweeping towards her.

“I will not fear.” She said as she opened her eyes to her impending doom. “For I serve thee oh lord, and I shall rise anew, washed clean of the sins of myself.”

And knowing that her fate was at hand, she closed her eyes and took a deep breath... and let it consume her.

“So what do we have here?” Commander Turner asked as he entered the C.I.C. and approached the situation table.

“It’s a cargo vessel.” Answered Sheba as she rolled out a transparent diagram of the ship. “Moderately armed with weapons systems similar to our own but not as advanced.”

“What specific weapons does it have?” asked Colonel Ryan.

“It has dual machine guns of a slightly lesser caliber than the ones we have mounted on our Vipers.” Sheba said pointing to the center of the diagram. “There set in a turret here and from what we can tell, they are controlled by the co-pilot in the cockpit. There are also missile launchers mounted here on a bottom turret that is in direct axis line from the top mounted machine guns.”

“Are they controlled from the cockpit too?” Asked Major Karla Horvath, the Prometheus C.A.G.

“Yes.” Sheba replied nodding.

“What’s her engines look like?” Commander Turner asked pointing to the engine section of the diagram.

“Right now they look like shit sir.” Came the reply of Chief Watts.

Turner cast a glance at the outspoken chief. “That’s not exactly the opinion I was asking for Chief.”

Unashamed, the chief replied “I understand sir, but right now my crew is having a hard time making heads or tails of anything. She took a lot of damage before we found here.”

“How badly was she hit?” Colonel Ryan asked.

Watts shook his head. “Sir, I doubt that they could even have restarted their engines without major repairs.”

“Sir,” Sheba said, “Maybe we should ask our guest these questions. So far he seems pretty cooperative with us.”

Turner nodded in agreement. “Do it.” He said to Sheba. “And see if you can find a way to figure out what his ‘friend’ down in the brig is saying too.”

“Right away sir.” Sheba responded as she turned to leave.

“Colonel Ryan, I want you to prepare a dispatch to Colonial Fleet Headquarters describing our current situation. Inform them that I intend to investigate this as far as I can.” Turner ordered.

“Does that mean we’re putting the primary mission on hold?” Ryan asked.

“Colonel, our primary mission is to explore and investigate beyond the Red Line. That’s what we’re doing.” Turner replied.

“Yes sir.” Ryan replied. “I’ll post the message within the hour.”

Turner nodded and turned to leave but was stopped as Lieutenant Halloran from the operations station suddenly jerked upright.

“Dradis contact sir!” Halloran announced. “Bearing three one zero karem zero eight one.”

Immediately, Turner was back at the situation table. “Action stations.” He commanded. “Set condition one and launch the alert Vipers.”

“Yes sir!” Halloran replied activating the comm system. “Action stations! Action stations! Set condition one throughout the ship. This is not a drill! I say again, action stations...”

“Got a hunch boss?” Colonel Ryan asked leaning close in to Turner.

“Yeah.” Turner replied. “If that ship was shot up that bad...”

“These could be the guys who did it.” Ryan finished for him.

“Yep.” Turner said grimly as he turned to P.O. Madrid, the comm NCO. “Maddie, inform Colonel Alexander to have the Sentinel stand by to flank and tell Colonel Hall to get ready to hit that ship with everything it’s got.”

“Yes sir.” Madrid replied.

And with those commands, the Prometheus prepared to fight.

CHAPTER 3

EXILES

“Mister Halloran, I want target solutions on that ship now.” Colonel Ryan commanded from next to the operations station. “Palmer, do we have a read on that ship yet?”

“Yes sir,” Master Chief Palmer replied, “She’s a capital class ship sir with approximately the same spatial displacement as a Hermes Class Battlestar.”

“Batteries one, three and five have a solution on the target vessel sir.” Lieutenant Halloran announced.

“Very well, stand by at weapons hold.” Turner commanded turning to Petty Officer Madrid. “Send out a general hail on all channels with standard hostile challenge.”

“Aye sir.” Madrid said as she activated her broadband comm. “Attention unknown vessel: this is the Colonial Battlestar Prometheus. Identify yourself and state your intentions or we will fire upon you.”

Silence enveloped everyone in the C.I.C. as they waited on the edge of their seats for a response.

“Send it again.” Turner said after several moments of silence.

Madrid nodded. “I say again, unknown vessel this is the Battlestar Prometheus. Identify...”

“Colonial Battlestar Prometheus, this is the Terran Alliance Battleship *Kraken*.” A slightly accented voice said over the loud speakers. “We are here in pursuit of two escaped criminals and intend you no harm. Please call off your fighters and stand down from combat readiness.”

Turner looked at Colonel Ryan who only shrugged in response. “Terran Alliance?”

Turner shook his head. “Whoever they are, they speak Colonial Basic.” He said. “Maddie, put me through down here. Colonel Ryan, listen in.”

Ryan nodded and both men picked up their handsets and placed them to their heads. “Alliance Battleship Kraken this is Commander Turner, commanding officer of the Prometheus.”

“Prometheus, this is Precentor Thomasi, master of the Kraken. Our intentions are not hostile, please call off your fighters.” Thomasi said over the handset. “

“Precentor Thomasi, this is Commander Turner. Our sensors indicate that you have launched fighters as well.” Turner replied, “I suggest that we each recall all but our standard patrol in a sign of mutual peaceful intent.”

The comm was silent for a moment before Thomasi finally replied. “Agreed. With your permission, I would like to meet you face to face to discuss our situation.”

Ryan held the handset away from his face and covered the mouthpiece. “Don’t do it.” He mouthed shaking his head.

Turner considered his advice for a moment, then said. “Agreed. You may bring a small shuttle over to our port side landing bay. I will meet you there.”

“Agreed. We will depart presently.” Thomasi said as he cut the line.

“Sir,” Ryan said hanging up his handset. “I got a bad feeling about this.”

“I agree.” Turner replied as he hung up his own handset. “But I want to meet him face to face and try to get a measure of him. We might be able to get some answers about our friends from the ship too.”

“Yes sir.” Ryan replied, “I’ll send a detachment of Marines down to the port landing bay as an *honor guard*.”

Turner smiled at his X.O.’s sly manner. “Good idea. Appraise Sheba of the situation and have her keep our guests under wraps until further notice. I want to get both side of this story before I make any decisions.”

As she strolled into the bar in Baghera, the capital of the Colony world of Leonon, every head turned towards her and she smiled. The lustful stares of men in various states of intoxication washed up and down her perfect body, over her blonde hair and glowing smile as she scanned the room with her eyes looking for the right one.

It took her only a moment until she saw him.

With refined good looks, medium length brown hair and an air of superiority about him, he sat in a corner booth sipping on what looked to be an expensive glass of Ambrosia while he studied a personal data screen in front of him.

With confidence in her stride she walked towards the bar and positioned herself within eyesight of her target. With a subtle gesture to the bartender she ordered herself a glass of what her target was having.

Sitting there, she watched him for about half an hour while at the same time politely fending off advances from other would be suitors. It was then, as she was turning away yet another offer of a free drink that the man of her interest looked up from his data screen and turned his head towards her.

She saw in his eyes that he had seen her and she smiled invitingly at him. He hesitated only a moment before closing his data screen and walking over to her with his glass in his hand.

“I know this will sound extremely cliché” the man said to her with a shy smile, “But what is a high class lady like yourself doing in a place like this?”

“I like places like this.” The blonde beauty said in response, “I find it more comfortable to sit here with the salt of the world than with those whom I would call my peers.”

This elicited a smile from the man as he took a seat next to her. “You know, I feel the same way.” He said.

“Then it seems we have something in common then.” The blonde replied taking a sip from her glass.

“My name is...” the man began to say. He was stopped as the blonde placed her index finger to his lips to silence him.

“No names.” She said with a seductive grin, “Let’s just enjoy the moment.”

Two rows of Marines, their black uniforms crisp and pressed, their black boots shined to a mirror gloss, stood at attention as the deck crew of the Prometheus ushered in the foreign looking shuttle craft into the port hangar deck.

The ship was shaped with an elongated body and wings that protruded out from the back by the large dual engines that were centered on the back of the ship. This had the effect of making the ship look like a stylized letter T.

“Detail, atten-SHUN!” commanded Lieutenant Shelly Archer as the ship came to a halt in front of the procession. Immediately, the Marines posture snapped taut as they stood to rigid attention.

From behind them Commander Turner was pleased by their discipline as he marched forward to greet the visitors. He was followed quickly by Colonel Ryan who wore a sidearm, albeit against Turner’s wishes.

Turner came to a halt and waited patiently a short distance from where the boarding ramp of the ship was now lowering. Around him he could feel the anxiety and tension building among his crew.

It was the same tension that was building in him too.

The ramp clanged as it came to rest against the metal deck of the Prometheus. As it did a hatch above hissed and opened upward allowing Turner his first glimpse at the visitors.

The first ones down the ramp were obviously honor guards. Dressed in steel grey fatigues they had flared helmets similar to the ones Colonial Marines wore, only grey in color and made of metal. Across their chests they carried polished rifles and their expressions were stoic with eyes that watched everything in the room. In that moment Turner learned his first lesson about the people they were meeting.

They were hardened warriors.

The two honor guards took positions flanking the end of the ramp as a man dressed in a black uniform stood at the top of the ramp. His black trousers had black piping that ran down the sides and the uniform top was similarly trimmed in silver. On his head he wore a black beret with a symbol on it that Turner had never before seen.

The uniform was completed by the knee high polished boots and a loose red sash that was buckled to his uniform top at the left shoulder by a silver buckle and ran across his chest to his right hip.

Taking in the sight before him the man began to walk down the ramp and Turner immediately knew that this was the man with whom he would meet.

Coming to the end of the ramp, the man raised his right arm and folded it over his chest, his fist clinching as he touched his left breast. He then extended that same arm out so that it was straight out and pointing at Turner with his fingers extended and pointed.

Beside Turner, Ryan was puzzled at the gesture but Turner knew immediately that it was their form of salute. Recognizing this, Turner returned the gesture with the standard Colonial salute.

“I’m Commander Turner.” He said introducing himself.

“And I am Precentor Thomasi.”

Both men dropped their salutes and looked each other over carefully for a moment but it was Thomasi who spoke first.

“This is an historic moment.” He said, his accent sounding strange to Turner’s ears. “The first time that we have made contact with human life other than our own.”

Turner nodded in agreement. “It is indeed.” He said gesturing to Ryan, “This is my second in command, Colonel James Ryan.”

“A pleasure to meet you sir.” Ryan said formally.

Thomasi nodded in greeting. “The pleasure is all mine Colonel.” He replied turning his attention back to Turner. “I’m sure there are many questions you would like to ask.”

“I am understandably curious.” Turner said, “Would you care to join me in one of our meeting rooms? I’m sure we could arrange for some refreshment there.”

“That would be agreeable.” Thomasi replied after a moment’s consideration. “Manto Hic.” He said turning to the guards.

“Sicut impereo!” Both men replied as they snapped salutes.

The Precentor nodded and gestured to Turner. “As you lead.” He said.

“Good to see you awake.” Said Stacie Percival as she entered the area where Lucas Verenos bed was located. “How are you feeling?”

“Better, thank you.” Lucas replied taking a sip of water. “Although things seem to be a bit tense around here right now. What’s going on?”

“Nothing to be concerned about.” Stacie replied nonchalantly. “Just something that the commander has going.”

“Good to hear.” Lucas said. Reading the tension in Stacie’s posture he instantly knew something was amiss, however, years of experience in tight situations had taught him to never reveal his suspicions so he maintained an air of calm. “I assume that you have some questions for me?”

Stacie smiled. “Yes actually. The Commander is extremely curious about what you were saying earlier about the lost children of Kobol. He was hoping that you wouldn’t mind elaborating on it.”

Lucas nodded as understanding dawned on him. “You didn’t expect to find humans out here did you?” he asked.

“Not really, no.” Stacie replied.

He considered his situation for a moment and whether to answer this woman truthfully or where to remain quiet. For all he knew, these people could be the barbarians that history told them to be, but so far he hadn't seen it. In the end though, he decided to trust them. After all, it could be much worse.

"I assume that you know the story of Kobol, where all humanity began?" he asked.

"Yes, the thirteen tribes set out from Kobol. Twelve of them went one way and the Thirteenth went another." Stacie said.

"In a nut shell, yes." Lucas said, "But our history paints a far different picture. You see, our history says that we departed Kobol because the other twelve tribes were descended into barbarity. The enlightened Thirteenth Tribe, us," he added rolling his eyes, "Struck out to find a new home."

Stacie's eyes shot wide as he spoke the words to her. "Y-you mean... you guys are descended from the thirteenth tribe?" she asked, her eyes widening, "You guys are from Earth?"

Lucas laughed. "You're not listening. We are *descended* from the thirteenth tribe but aren't *the* thirteenth tribe. They kept on moving towards their new home once they exiled us."

"Exiled?" Stacie asked.

"Yes," Lucas replied sadly, "Our history says that our ancestors departed from the Thirteenth Tribe because they sought to oppress our beliefs, that we were the victims of a cruel conspiracy. The truth is that we were *exiled* from them because they believed in human superiority. They believed that all other races were meant to serve us. That's why Squeaky is on the run with me. He was a slave that I freed."

Stacie nodded her head, a thoughtful expression on her face. "Do you know a man named Thomasi?" She asked.

Lucas sat up, his natural sense of alarm rising in his chest. "He's the commander of the Battle Cruiser Kraken, the ship that was trying to catch me. He's as sharp and as ruthless as they come."

"What kind of person is he?" Stacie asked.

"He's a soldier of the Empire first, foremost and always." Lucas replied, "He'll do whatever it takes to achieve victory. You... didn't let him on your ship did you?"

Stacie's silence was all the confirmation that Lucas needed. "I need to speak to your commander right now." Lucas demanded.

"Why?" Stacie asked. "What's wrong?"

"You're being set up is what's wrong." Lucas replied urgently. "I need to see Commander Turner *now*."

"The commander is negotiating with Precentor Thomasi right now." Stacie replied.

"Jupiter's stone! You have no idea what you're dealing with here captain." He pleaded. "The Alliance is a nation of conquerors, not negotiators."

Stacie smiled. "Lucas, he has only one ship and he's aboard our ship right now. He's hardly in any position..."

"Damn it woman!" Lucas exclaimed as he stood. "You still don't understand, do you?"

At the sound of the outburst, the Marines who had been standing guard outside the curtain burst in with weapons leveled at Lucas but Stacie held up a hand to forestall any action. "What exactly am I supposed to understand?" she asked.

Precentor Thomasi isn't here to talk to you. He's stalling you and getting a feel for you and your capabilities. I'm willing to bet that even as we speak he has reinforcements on the way. If you don't take action now, within the hour he will outnumber you ten to one."

CHAPTER 4

SHOWDOWN

“To family reunions.” Precentor Thomasi said as he raised his glass in salute.

Turner and Ryan both raised their glasses in response and took a sip of the Ambrosia within as they watched their guest closely.

“I must confess that I am fairly anxious with questions. I hope you do not mind me asking them?” Thomasi asked apologetically.

“By all means.” Turner said gesturing with an open hand.

“Tell me, have all of the twelve colonies united under one banner?”

“Within the last century, yes.” Turner replied.

“What was the situation before then?” Thomasi asked as he leaned forward.

Turner chuckled. “Well, you know human nature.” He said. “We didn’t all exactly get along.”

Thomasi smiled. “Indeed.” He replied. “We too have had our share of dissent, but we have dealt with it effectively. Tell me, what was it that united you?”

Turner’s face darkened for a moment.

“The Cylons.” Ryan replied sensing Turner’s discomfort on the subject.

“Cylons?” Thomasi asked curiously. “Who are these Cylons? An alien race?”

“If only.” Turner said under his breath

Thomasi looked ready to ask another question but Ryan forestalled him. “The Cylons were artificially intelligent robots that we created.” He explained. “In the beginning, we used them as servants and as soldiers.”

Thomasi looked stunned. “You have created... artificial life?” he asked incredulously.

“Unfortunately, yes.” Turner replied darkly. “At the time the Colonies were only a loose confederation. Each world was still governed by itself and not the central government we have today. Then the Cylons turned against us and all of that changed.”

Thomasi nodded but, sensing that it was a sore subject, declined to ask anymore about it. “I understand. Still, even in our wildest imagination we have not come close to creating artificial life. It is unfortunate that it turned out badly for you.”

“That’s one way of putting it.” Ryan agreed.

Thomasi sensed that the subject was a sore one and changed the subject. “What vessel is that?”

Turner looked and saw Thomasi pointing to the large picture of an older Battlestar that covered half of the back wall of the room. Turner smiled. “That was the first ship to bear the name Prometheus.” He said. “When the colonies first united we built a Battlestar for each of the colonies. That one fought in the Cylon war and was retired about ten years ago. She serves as the academy training vessel now.”

“And this impressive ship was named for her?” Thomasi asked.

“Yes.” Turner replied nodding. “She is the second Battlestar to bear the name.”

“You value tradition, as do we.” Thomasi said. “My ship, the *Kraken*, is the third ship to bear that name. The two before her were both destroyed honorably in battle.”

Turner exchanged a subtle look with Ryan and was about to ask a question when Thomasi’s communicator suddenly beeped.

Taking it out, he activated it. “Procedo.” He said.

“Supplementum unus assilire istinc.” A voice said from the bulky radio.

“Cognitum.” Thomasi replied. “Reditus ad navis statim.”

“Cognitum, Precentor.” The voice replied.

Thomasi flipped a switch and then placed the device back on his utility belt. “I must apologize, Commander. Something has occurred on my ship that requires my immediate attention.”

“Of course.” Turner replied standing. “I hope we can meet again soon. We have much to discuss I think.”

“I agree.” Thomasi replied.

“Colonel Ryan will escort you to your ship.” Turner said extending his hand. “It was a pleasure to meet you.”

Thomasi smiled. “Indeed Commander. We will see each other again. Soon.”

Within fifteen minutes, Turner was standing in C.I.C. intently reviewing various battle plans on the situation table in front of him. It was there that Sheba found him.

“Sir, I think we have a problem.” She said as she approached him.

“I agree.” Turner replied. “Look at this.”

Stacie took the offered report from Turner and began to read. “Seems like a lot of signal activity over the last hour.” She said, “And all in bursts, not a steady stream.”

“What’s your report?” Turner asked.

“Well sir,” Stacie said placing the report down, “Lucas has enlightened me about this Terran Alliance that Thomasi represents. He also told me a little about him.”

“Like?” Turner asked.

Stacie was about to answer when Lieutenant Halloran turned from the operations station. “Dradis contact sir! Multiple contacts, all maneuvering.”

“Action stations!” Turner commanded. “Set condition one throughout the fleet.”

Immediately, the call went out on the 1MC. “ACTION STATIONS! ACTION STATIONS! SET CONDITION ONE THROUGHOUT THE SHIP! THIS IS NOT A DRILL. I SAY AGAIN..”

“What’s up?” asked Colonel Ryan as he walked into the C.I.C.

“How many contacts?” Turner asked Halloran.

“I show three capital ships matching the mass of the Kraken sir.” Halloran replied. “They’re launching fighters!”

“What’s our status?” Turner demanded.

“Slider reports that Ace Squadron is away. Shooter reports that Knight Squadron is still launching.” Maddie reported from the comm station.

“Where is Ice Queen?” Ryan asked moving over to the operations station.

“She was on C.A.P. when the enemy jumped in sir.” Halloran replied. “She’s outbound to the enemy fighters right now.”

“Tell her to withdraw and join up with Ace squadron.” Turner commanded.

Maddie nodded and began to transmit.

“Sir, Shooter reports that Knight Squadron is away.” Halloran reported.

Stacie sighed in relief. There was nothing worse than being in the launch tubes when a fight started and she still carried the weight of her former command even though she was the ship's intelligence officer now.

“All stations report condition one set sir.” MCPO Palmer reported.

“All guns have firing solutions.” Halloran said.

“Very well, weapons hold.” Turner replied. “Maddie, hail the Kraken.”

“Um, sir... the Kraken is hailing us.” Maddie replied.

Turner and Ryan exchanged looks, the tension evident in both men's eyes.

“Put him on speaker.” Turner commanded.

Maddie nodded and flipped the switch. “You're on sir.”

“This is Commander Turner. Why have you surrounded my ship and launched fighters against us.”

The comm crackled with static for a moment before Thomasi's voice broke through. “Commander Turner, this is Precentor Thomasi. I deeply regret the situation that has arisen here but your presence has been determined a direct threat to the security of the Terran Alliance.”

“I'm sorry too.” Turner replied. “However, we recognize the sovereignty of your space and will withdraw accordingly.”

“Very gracious of you Commander.” Thomasi replied, “But I am afraid that we have moved beyond that point.”

“What do you mean?” Turner asked, a sinking feeling beginning to permeate stomach.

“I am truly sorry, commander.” Thomasi replied, “In the name of the Terran Alliance I demand that you surrender your vessel.”

EPILOGUE

SWEET VICTORY

The blonde woman boarded the transport early in the morning, bound for Troy. It would be a quick trip to the capital city of the mining colony and from there, she would meet her contact and return home, her mission accomplished.

Her seduction of the man known as James Sillac had been flawless and the night they had shared had been fantastic. She was now confident that she could accomplish her mission when the time came.

Looking out the window to the horizon as she sat down in her seat, she marveled at the beauty of God's work. The blazing purple and golden hues as the sun rose over the world of Leonon brought a tear to her eye as she realized that within a year, the only thing that would be blazing on Leonon would be nuclear fire.

"She's been downloaded." The Six said to the model known as Cavil.

"And?" Cavil asked, turning away from the view of the planet spinning below him.

Six took a deep breath. "Well her basic functions are intact as well as her basic knowledge."

"But?" Cavil pressed.

"She has no conscious memories." Six replied. "Everything that she was.... is lost."

Cavil nodded. "Keep her in stasis for now." He said, "I think I have an idea..."

Nat Tubanos awoke to the spectacular view of a lake outside her bedroom window. Feeling the satin sheets underneath her naked form, the memories of the previous night began to return.

There had been a party in Caprica City and only the elite had been invited. Of course, she had her many sources and so she too had managed to appear on the guest list.

Once there she had found her way into the conversation circle of many of the movers and shakers of the colonies, listening much and speaking little in each of them until finally, the one she had waited for arrived.

He looked dapper, as usual, dressed in the latest style to come from the fashion guru's on Leonon. She watched him, waiting patiently as he greeted many of the party goes in that typical aloof fashion that he had.

Finally, after fifteen minutes she had begun her approach.

He had been hesitant to speak with her at first and it had taken her nearly an hour, along with several strong drinks, to convince him that she was safe to talk to. From there it had been easy.

Now here she was, waking up in his bed after a rollicking night. The sheets still smelled of the passionate moments they had spent in the wee hours of the morning.

Beside her, he stirred.

“Good morning.” She said running her hand through his hair.

“Good morning.” Mumbled Gaius Baltar.

TO BE CONTINUED...