

Writer's Note: This story is a crossover of two fandoms: the re-imagined Battlestar Galactica and the Japanese animated series Space Battleship Yamato, known in the United States as Star Blazers. The characters from Star Blazers will be used in this story, and will take place ten years after the events of the last Yamato animated film, Final Yamato. The Battlestar Galactica part of the story will take place after the events of the second season finale, Lay Down Your Burdens, Part II.

The Starblazers part of this story is inspired by the web comic of the series, Star Blazers: Rebirth, which is the creation of Tim Eldred. I am using the events that he has in place for the year 2214, sans the black hole that is coming towards Earth, which I deleted for my own creative purposes.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter One

Blonde Haired Heroines

September 4, 2214

Aboard EDS Battleship 20 Avatar

Approaching spaceport outside Megalopolis

Captain Nova Wildstar (nee Forrester) was looking forward to coming back home after this routine patrol of the Milky Way Galaxy just as much as everyone else on her crew. However, for the few of them who had been with the Star Force a decade and a half ago, it was especially noteworthy, as tomorrow would be the fourteenth anniversary of their return from Iscandar with the Cosmo-DNA that saved Earth and the human race from extinction. It was also her tenth wedding anniversary with her husband, Derek Wildstar, whom she had met as part of that fateful journey into the unknown.

We were so young back then, Nova thought as she watched her bridge crew go through the procedures of flying the state of the art ship towards the spaceport. It was a far cry from the space battleship Yamato, which rested at the bottom of the ocean on the water world of Atlantis. That was the end of the five years of fire, in which Earth and the human race face almost constant threat from enemies out to either destroy them or to dominate them. Yamato and her crew, called the Star Force by Major General Charles Singleton, who headed the Earth Defense Force and had been behind the creation of the elite fighting force, had been through it all, losing many during those eventful years and gaining a few during the brief interregnums between battles.

It had been ten years since the Dinguil's plan of flooding Earth by using the water world of Aquarius had been thwarted. Nova's eyes misted over whenever she thought of her former commanding officer, Captain Abraham Avatar, sitting in the command seat and pulling the trigger on Yamato's wave motion gun, which had been blocked so as to create a massive explosion to deflect the onrushing streams of water heading towards Earth.

Logic dictated that the water should have frozen in the vacuum of space, but logic seemed to take a holiday in those five years. Even with the ten years of peace since then, she still had a hard time believing all she had been through. The Gamilon war, the Comet Empire attack, the war with the Dark Nebulan Empire, the Bolar war, and the Dinguil conflict seemed to simultaneously feel like it had been both ages ago and the day before yesterday.

"Captain, we're about to splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. Orders?" Executive Officer Homer Glitchman said calmly as he looked towards her. Nova shoved her mental woolgathering to the side and focused on the task at hand. It was routine: the ship would land in the ocean a few miles outside of Megalopolis, retract its wings after landing in the ocean, and make its way towards the port. Megalopolis was located between Tokyo and Yokohama in what was once known as Japan years ago before the Gamilons attacked, but had become the de facto world capital when Leader Deslok's forces tried to bomb the humans into extinction and take the world for themselves.

"Take us in, Jordie!" she said to Jordie Venture, the ship's pilot. He nodded and went about the task just like his older brother Mark would have had he still been here. Yet another memory she

had to force to the side so she could do her job, but she couldn't help but to take a brief moment and remember her late friend.

The Avatar sailed into port with ease, and Nova hoped that the man whom this mighty ship was named after would have been proud of the way she'd handled her. Deep in her heart, she figured that he would be.

The process of disembarking took some time, but she managed to get through it with ease. As she walked down the gangplank, she spotted the two people that mattered most to her in the whole universe: her husband Derek, and their nine year old daughter Miyuki, named after one of Nova's best friends who had died before they had gotten home from Iscandar. She fell into Derek's embrace, which was warm and loving and natural as always. She could think of no better place to be in the whole universe.

"I am so glad to have you back, Nova!" Derek whispered into her ear as he gently kissed her cheek.

"I know!" Nova said, then she felt a gentle tugging on her leg. She looked down at her daughter and smiled.

"I want a hug, too!" Miyuki said, and Nova leaned down and gave her one. She noted that she hadn't had to lean down as far as she had when she had left six months ago. Her daughter was growing fast, and Nova wondered again if she was doing right by serving in the EDF and not being there for her daughter.

Derek and Nova had been over this before. He had stepped down from the military ranks to serve the EDF in a civilian capacity. These days, he sat on the Defense Council, helping General Singleton deal with the fractious members as best he could. Peace had begun to undo what the fire of war had forged, and both he and the General, along with the general's executive assistant, Wendy Singleton-Glitchman, who also happened to be the general's granddaughter.

Speaking of the general's granddaughter, she waited for her husband at the base of the gangplank. It wasn't a long wait, as he was directly behind Nova. Wendy was a short, skinny, red-haired young woman, but, like a lot of redheads, she was fiery and fierce, which she needed to be when dealing with the Council. Her parents had succumbed to the effects of the radiation from the Gamilon bombings, so her granddad had taken her under his wing. She had been there for pretty much every moment of the years of fire, and was considered by all the surviving members of the Star Force to be one of their own.

Nova took off her cap and brushed some of her long, sunny blonde hair out of her eyes. She was tall, lithe, and as beautiful as a model, but she was far from a weak woman. As Derek knew all too well, Nova was a highly skilled combat officer, which wasn't her original forte. Back when the Yamato first launched, she was Life Sciences Officer, where she was responsible for life support issues. She also served as the chief nurse to the ship's doctor, Dr. Sakezo Sane, whose short, fat, balding stature served as a contrast to her.

"We'd better head home. The ceremony's tomorrow, you know." Derek said as he walked away from the gangplank, his arm around his wife.

"I know. I'm just glad we made it back in time." Nova said. Tomorrow was their tenth wedding anniversary, but it was also the fourteenth anniversary of their return home from Iscandar. As per tradition, the remaining members of the Star Force would assemble at the monument to their leader, Captain Abraham Avatar, up on Heroes' Hill. They would not only honor him, but also those members of the Star Force who had perished in helping to save Earth.

"Hey, Homer! You and Wendy want to come over to our place for dinner tonight?" Derek called out to his friend.

"I'd like to, but Wendy and I had already committed to dinner with her father tonight, since he's due to retire day after tomorrow. How about a couple of days from now, after the big meeting with the council?"

"That'll be fine, Homer! See you guys in the morning!" Nova said, waving at them as they made their way to their place.

Later that evening, they had a time putting Miyuki to bed, but they managed to load her down with dinner and some sweet treats for dessert. Once she was in bed, Derek went to the bedroom he shared with his wife. "She's fast asleep. So what do you want to do now?"

Nova gave him a seductive glance and asked, "Well, what do military couples usually do when one of them returns home?" She said this as she was slipping out of her uniform.

Derek smiled broadly and started taking off his own clothes. As soon as they were disrobed, they embraced and slowly kissed, enjoying the contact of their bodies against one another after so long. Soon enough, they were making love in their bed. Time and space was lost in this coupling, so when they finished after seemingly forever, Derek didn't even think to look at the alarm clock. It had been a long day, so they both dozed off as soon as they had finished their lovemaking.

New Caprica Settlement
(Under Cylon Occupation)

Kara "Starbuck" Thrace-Anders should have known that it was a mistake to settle down on this world. Her instincts had told her to stay in space, but she loved her husband so much that she just wanted to have a simple life, the kind she thought she'd never had. More than anything in the world, she wanted stability, and regardless of what the others thought, she didn't mind being a reserve officer these days.

Now, with the Cylons having taken over the settlement and the two remaining battlestars having been forced to jump away with the remaining fleet, they were few if any soldiers left to fight off their enemies. But fight them off they would...someway.

She had enough problems as it was before the Cylons invaded. Her husband, Samuel T. Anders, had developed a bad case of pneumonia, and Doc Cottle didn't have any anti-biotic to give her to help treat him. She had just asked Commander Lee "Apollo" Adama for some of the backup meds aboard Pegasus when the Cylons jumped in. Lee hadn't even had the chance to say yes or no.

In a way, maybe it was a good thing that he never answered that question. Things had become strained between them, and it was all her fault. Instead of being two friendly couples, Samuel and Kara never came around Lee and Dee. Anastasia "Dee" Dualla was Lee's lover these days, and she had come to resent Kara's meddling with Lee. It wasn't one blow-up that had driven the wedge between them, but several incidents where Kara had royally frakked up.

In their modest tent, Kara fixed some soup for her husband, as well as two of their visitors: Galen Tyrol and his wife Cally. Galen used to be deck chief aboard Galactica, but these days he was the labor union leader for all the workers in their settlement, and frequently clashed with that buffoon of a president, Gaius Baltar.

Thinking of Baltar made Kara grind her teeth together. A year and a half ago, she had been so stupid to have actually slept with Baltar, thinking it would help her deal with her attraction to Lee. This had been before she had met Sam while on a mission from then-President Laura Roslin back to Caprica. She had been forced to leave him once, but she managed to convince Admiral Adama and President Roslin to let her lead a mission back to Caprica to rescue him, along with his Caprica Buccaneer teammates.

Sam had been a professional pyramid player before the attacks, and had been fortunate to be in the high mountains outside Delphi City in training when the Cylons nuked the planet. After the attacks, he and his teammates had become a mercenary force, attacking the Cylons whenever they could. They had met up with a variety of people who had been lucky to be in the high elevations when the attacks occurred, so they had managed plenty of successes in confronting the Cylons.

Kara admired him for his bravery, but it had come with a price. She suspected that the pneumonia was just a symptom of a far greater affliction: radiation sickness. She didn't know for sure if Sam had cancer, but she wouldn't have bet against it.

They needed a miracle, and they needed it fast. Where it was going to come from, she didn't know. But as the saying went, "The Gods help those who help themselves", which was why Galen and Cally were here.

"Sorry if it's not that great." Kara said apologetically as she served the soup to the three people at the table.

"You don't have to apologize, Kara. Galen and I can't cook either, but we make do." Cally said, which drew a brief smile from Kara. Cally was five months pregnant, and seeing her tugged at the deeply embedded maternal instincts within her. Had it not been for the Cylons and Sam's illness, she may very well have been pregnant herself. She hadn't even come close to wanting a child before she met Anders, but having been married to him for almost a year now, she had started to seriously consider it.

They dug into the modest soup and ate heartily. Even with the hot soup and the thick material that made up the tent, the cold still seeped in. It wasn't the first time that Kara had cursed Baltar for settling in this area, and many more people were growing discontent with their lot before the Cylons showed up.

"So what did you want to discuss?" Galen asked.

"Do you still want to see who we could get to sneak out of here and start planning a resistance?" Kara asked.

"I've been mentioning it to some of the people I trust within the union, and I have a few people who are ready to go when you give the word. Some from when we were back on Galactica, some who were on Pegasus, and some of the civilians within the fleet. About thirty to thirty five in total, but we'll need bullets and guns and such."

"Leave that to me. Adama and I had planned for something like this, so we snuck some stuff up in the mountains just ten clicks from here."

"You did?" said Galen and Cally at the same time.

"The old man and I had worried that something like this might happen. So when our president wasn't looking, we flew some Raptors over to a secret location and stockpiled some stuff. Helo helped with it, so we've got plenty of stuff when we're ready to move out. But we'll probably need some more foodstuffs before we head out." Kara said.

"I can take care of that." Cally said. "I have some friends who work on the farm, so I think we can get what we need from them without anyone noticing. Just give me a week to work on it."

"Thanks Cally. It'll be a couple of weeks before we move out anyway. We need things to settle down a bit more before we head out." Kara replied.

The next day, Kara went over to the school to meet with Laura Roslin before the school day started. After losing the presidential election, she had gone back to being a teacher, which gave her some solace after the painful defeat. Now, however, she had seen her worst nightmare come to life, and yet another pang of pain went through her heart as she watched some Centurions march past the schoolhouse.

"Good morning, Madam President. Do you have a moment?" Kara asked. She might no longer be president, but it didn't matter to Kara. Laura had long stopped trying to correct her.

"Good day, Kara. What can I do for you?" Roslin asked.

"Are you sure you want to stay here?"

Roslin looked around discreetly, just to be safe. She knew what Kara was asking. "Yeah, I need to stay here. I'm much too visible a person to leave here. Much as I wish I could, but..." Roslin shrugged.

Kara knew it was hopeless to convince her to come, mainly because she was right. If she suddenly disappeared, Baltar would freak out and suspect a rebellion was brewing. But if she stayed, she risked being killed once the reprisals started against the resistance.

"I know what troubles you, Kara. Death holds no fear for me anymore. If Baltar wants his pound of flesh because of what you guys are going to do, he can have it. I'll go to the gallows with a smile on my face."

Kara wiped her eyes, pretending that some of the mist from the approaching rains had gotten into her eyes. "I hope it doesn't come to that, Madam President!"

"I hope so too. Then again, prophecy may finally be right after all." Laura looked around and saw some of the humanoid Cylons walking close by. "I'll take your idea under advisement, Kara. It'd be good to get the kids out to learn the game of pyramid as soon as the rains subside." Laura said aloud.

Kara took the hint and replied, "Just let me know when you have decided on what to do, Laura. Sam and I would be glad to teach the kids!" She walked away and avoided the gaze of the humanoid Cylons as best she could.

Two weeks later, they were ready to leave. However, Sam's pneumonia had gotten worse, so Cally volunteered to stay behind and help take care of him. Galen Tyrol didn't want to leave his wife behind, but he had no choice. Cally was better off staying behind and could cover for them if need be.

They did have help from an unlikely source, though. Colonel Saul Tigh and Kara Thrace had managed to somehow patch up their differences in the past year, much to each other's surprise. When Kara went to him for help, he gladly volunteered his assistance. "It's not like I have much choice, since they took Ellen away from me.", he growled. She had been chosen as one of the humans to be turned over for breeding purposes, which had angered him. Ellen's last words to him before leaving were, "Don't worry for me, Saul. I'll be alright. Do what you have to do."

A week after they had snuck out late one night, someone had finally noticed that Kara and Galen, among others, were gone. One of the Sharon models came by Sam's tent to ask where they had gone, and Cally delivered the rehearsed lines like an award-winning actor. "Those frakking asses! I never suspected they were having an affair! I hope those damned Centurions of yours shoot them up, because I never want to see that damned Galen Tyrol ever again! How could he do this to me!"

"I'm sorry. Why are you in here, though?"

"Well, someone has to care for Sam, and since Kara only cares about frakking..." Cally shook her head. "He's my friend, and I'm going to help take care of him."

The Sharon model nodded and left. Cally waited a few minutes before whispering to Sam, "How'd I do?"

Between coughs, he said, "Damned good! Kara and Galen would be proud!"

Cally looked towards the mountains, which were blocked by the fabric of the tent. "I hope so."

Kara had established the base camp inside a cave high up on a trail about midway up one of the higher peaks. From their vantage point, they could see the entire settlement before them. To the east, up on a hill, was where Colonial One was. Fitting that Baltar's home abutted the Cylon base camp, Kara thought. Next to that was the camp where the humans who had been selected for breeding experiments were staying. Kara remembered her time of one of the Cylon farms back on Caprica and cringed. Had it not been for Anders and the rest, she might still be in that hospital, hooked up to some machine to mine her remaining ovary for eggs.

"Perimeter's clear. Go grab some rack time, Captain." Tigh said. "You're relieved from watch."

"Thank you, Colonel. Wonder how the old man's doing?"

"He's fine. Knowing him, he's planning to come back here. Gods know how he'll do it, but I wouldn't put it past him!"

"Me either!" Kara added.

Nova and Kara had little in common. They were both blondes and military officers, and that was about it. But soon, though, their paths would cross, and the fate of the human race would rest on both their shoulders. Both had seen much in their lives, and both didn't want to have to fight the war that was to come, but fight it they must.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Two

In Remembrance of Those Lost

Writer's Note: The Star Blazers portion of this particular chapter is mostly taken from the third issue of the Tim Eldred-created webcomic, *Star Blazers: Rebirth*. This writer has adapted it for my own creative purposes for this story. You can find it at under the Rebirth banner on the main page.

September 5, 2214

7am

Heroes' Hill, just outside Megalopolis

Jordy Venture came running up towards Wendy and Homer, breezing up the steps to the gigantic monument as if they weren't there. "Here they come! Everyone get ready!"

"Did they see you, Jordy?" Homer asked.

"Almost. Gotta move fast to keep ahead of the boss!" Jordy replied breathlessly as all those assembled hustled behind the monument before Derek, Nova, and Miyuki Wildstar came into view.

Derek looked around as they made their way up the last step and said, "Looks like we're the first to arrive!"

Miyuki, who was perched on the shoulders of IQ-9, said, "Again! Mo-o-o-m! Why do we have to get up so early if no one else does?"

Nova turned to look at her daughter with a smile and explained, "Because then we get the surprise on them, sweetie!"

Just as she said that, they all came around the corner and yelled out, "SURPRISE!" Fireworks went off and lit up the early morning sky, spelling out, "Happy 10th Anniversary Derek and Nova".

Nova looked around after seeing the fireworks display to see her XO saluting her along with the rest of her bridge crew. "Homer! I should have known!"

"Captain Forrester, your crew is present and accounted for, ma'am!" Homer said officially. Nova kept using her maiden name for her military side at Derek's request, mainly so that they could avoid comparisons to his own command career. If her traditionalist parents had been around, they might have had a thing to say about that, but they were gone now, so she didn't mind using her original last name for her career.

Homer pointed over his shoulder to a few other captains who had come for the celebrations, adding, "Plus a few slackers we found in low orbit." Christopher Eager, captain of the Mizutani, Dashell "Dash" Jordan, captain of the Gideon, and Cory Conroy, captain of the Yamanami, gave Homer the raspberries at that introduction, then saluted their former Yamato crew member.

"So I see." Nova said with a wink and a laugh.

Derek couldn't help but rib them a bit. "Look at these guys! They think they're captains or something!"

Eager, who had gone from being a svelte radar operator on Yamato to being a stocky, muscular captain with an outstanding military record, playfully jibed back, "Take a gander at that one! Reckon he looks like a captain has been!" All four men laughed at the mock taunting.

Derek replied, "Actually, I've come to think of it more as a 'superiority phase' I went through. You'll grow out of it!"

"I beg your pardon!" Nova said pointedly. Derek knew he had screwed up, so he hurriedly said,

"Star Force, Ten Hut!" All of them came to attention in front of the huge monument of the man who had led them on that fateful mission to Iscandar, saluting him in their traditional fashion, with their forearm in front of their heart and their hand balled into a fist. It had been the idea of Avatar's, since most of the crew was not officially with the military, and he had wanted to find a way to ease the transition for those who hadn't originally been part of the EDF.

Derek addressed the likeness of his former commanding officer and said, "Captain Avatar, your crew salutes you on this fourteenth anniversary of the day of return. All of planet Earth thanks you once again for your courage and vision. The Star Force thanks you for your guidance and sacrifice."

It never failed that these grown men and women were moved to tears during this ceremony. Captain Avatar had been like a father to them all, but most especially to Derek, since he had lost his own parents during the bombings as a young boy.

His voice heavy with emotion, Derek added, "And, sir...I thank you for showing me a life beyond the field of battle!" He turned to the others and said aloud, "As you know, Nova and I have a beautiful daughter now, but we think of everyone here as family. They've supported us throughout all the years of our marriage, and now we're asking them to support someone else."

"Commander Singleton wanted to join us, but you all know of his plans for tomorrow. This is the last day that he's got to prepare, and he needs all the time he can get."

"After he speaks, Wendy and I will go before the Council and deliver our remarks. I know we can count on you to be with us. We couldn't have come this far without you."

Cory Conroy shouted, "Yeah! We're behind you, Wildstar!" Dash Jordan added, "All the way, Wildstar!"

Chief Patrick Orion added, "We have the ship ready to go, Derek!", referring to the recently completed Andromeda II space battleship.

Jordy Venture asked, "Sir, is it true you're going to reclaim your old rank?"

Derek knew the answer, but had to keep the suspense up. "You'll find out everything tomorrow, Jordy!" He walked over to Wendy, placed his hand on his shoulder, smiled and said, "They won't know what hit them!" Wendy smiled as he said that, and both of them looked forward to the next day's Council meeting.

From his office window, the commander of the Earth Defense Force, General Charles Singleton, could see the monument on Heroes' Hill. He had wanted to be there, but he needed to complete a few things before tomorrow's meeting. With him in his office was his friend and colleague, Brigadier General Thomas Stone. They hadn't always been on the best of terms, mainly because Stone's army roots made him suspect of the EDF in general and of the Star Force in particular, but, through the years of fire, he was man enough to admit he was wrong, and he had made peace with the Star Force.

"You know those bastards are going to want to skewer you after you spring your little surprise, don't you? But I have to agree with your decision. You couldn't have made a better choice." Stone said.

"Well, I could have went with Wildstar, but I knew he wouldn't take it. He hates bureaucracy more than I do! Better to let someone who gets pleasure from setting those stuffed shirts straight!" Singleton replied as he leaned back in his seat and looked up from his work at Stone, who was seated across from him.

Stone nodded and they continued on with their meeting, which pretty much was all about preparing for tomorrow's meeting. Singleton had met earlier with Wendy and had filled her in on the last details of what she would need to know before taking over. It wasn't anything that she hadn't already known, since she'd been his assistant for years, being there as a young recruit when the Yamato took off for Iscandar.

That had been nothing short of a miracle, he thought as he looked out his window towards Heroes' Hill. One hundred and forty-four thousand light years and back in one Earth year? It was impossible, but, thanks to Queen Starsha and her late sister Astra, they had done it. He chuckled as he thought about the meeting tomorrow, yeah, and Wendy'll need a miracle to deal with those damned bureaucratic bozos on the Council.

On board Colonial Battlestar Galactica

Admiral William Adama looked at his mustache in the mirror as he shaved, seriously pondering if he should shave it off. He grew it mainly because he'd been depressed about Gaius Baltar winning the election and settling New Caprica. It felt much like when he had been mustered out of service after the first Cylon war. He'd wanted to stay in and advance up the chain of command, but the commanders and bureaucrats above him decided to cut back on the amount of officers and noncoms, and he had been one of the unlucky ones.

He had been a Captain when he left the service. He worked on board a freighter as a bridge officer, which was as close as he could get to the military life in civilian terms. He married his girlfriend Caroline and they had two sons, Lee and Zak. To Caroline, it was the perfect life, despite the fact that her husband was away for a week or two at a time on long shipping runs. He was there enough for his sons as they grew up, but the itch to get into the military never could go away.

He had managed to finally get back in, and also to eventually pull in his friend Saul Tigh back into the service. Granted, he wasn't ever going to make Admiral, but his goal was to command a battlestar. Any battlestar. Even a relic like Galactica.

There was a price, of course. His wife, figuring that he would eventually come back planetside and fly a desk in some office on a military base, had realized that it had been a mistake to hook

him back up with the military through her connections. Their marriage fell apart and they divorced, but not before both sons were grown.

Then Zak died, and it seemed the world crashed in around him. Lee blamed him for pushing his younger brother into something he clearly wasn't cut out for, and his now-ex wife distanced herself further away from him because of the pain. The only person who understood was Kara Thrace, who had been Zak's flight instructor as well as fiancé, and Adama had her transferred to Galactica to be a Viper pilot.

When word came down that Galactica was to be turned into a museum, he saw the writing on the wall and put in for retirement. His military pension, as well as that from the freighter company that he had worked for between stints in the military, would provide him plenty of money for him to figure out what to do for the rest of his life. His executive officer, Colonel Saul Tigh, was retiring as well, and the two of them were kicking around plans about what to do with all their free time that was to come.

Then the Cylons attacked the twelve Colonial homeworlds and the idea of retirement evaporated like human flesh near one of the nukes the Cylons had used to defeat humanity. Adama had managed to get his old battlewagon back into service, after a fashion, and had managed to keep the civilian fleet protected. Despite the problems with the Pegasus, he had managed to finally calm things down with his son taking the reins and molding the crew into what he wanted them to be.

Then he found out about Roslin's plan to throw the election to prevent Baltar from winning, and he was conflicted heavily. He knew that if Baltar won, it would spell disaster, but how could he live with himself if he allowed the election to be rigged? He confronted Roslin with the evidence of collusion between Tigh and a member of Roslin's staff, and the president, much to his chagrin and disappointment, confessed. He managed to convince her to allow the results to stand and for Baltar to become president.

Then the Cylons found them, thanks to the terrorist attack on Cloud 9. Someone had managed to smuggle the nuke Baltar had been using as part of his Cylon detector off of Galactica and onto the luxury cruise liner, where it had been detonated, taking it out along with several smaller ships. Almost a fifth of all the surviving humans had died in the incident, leaving them with less than forty thousand humans left. Worse yet, the Cylons had managed to detect the radiation signature from the blast a year later, and had discovered New Caprica.

They had invaded and now occupied the Colonial settlement. He had no idea what they were doing now, which ripped at his soul. But he had an ace up his sleeve...

"What do you mean go down to the planet, sir? I want to stay here!" Kara "Starbuck" Thrace protested.

"I need you down there, if what I fear comes to pass." Adama had said a year earlier.

"They can't find us here, sir! Surely the blast can't be seen by the Cylons!" Starbuck shook her head, not believing that the man whom she considered to be her second father was sending her down to the planet and putting her into the reserves.

"How do we know they won't? I need an ace in the hole if they do come, Kara, and you're that ace in the hole." He then told her what he had done: putting a shipment of armaments and survival gear in the mountains near the settlement. "If they do come, get who you can out there and do what you can do to resist them."

Starbuck had reluctantly agreed and went planetside, where she married her lover, Samuel Anders. A year later, her new husband had come down with pneumonia and wasn't doing well, from what he had heard. Adama had an idea as to why he wasn't getting any better, and it wasn't because they were low on medication. The exposure to the radiation from the bombings had to have taken a toll on those Starbuck had rescued from Caprica, and Adama suspected that Anders either had cancer or was in the early stages of getting it.

Even more heartbreakingly, there was now a rift between Starbuck and his son. Where they had almost become lovers (something Adama wished would happen, for both their sakes), Starbuck had gone with Anders and his son, Lee, had gone with his now-former bridge officer, Dee Dualla. He didn't know all the details of what had happened, but from what he knew, Dee and Starbuck had an argument over Lee that was so heated that members of the Pegasus had

to be called into to separate them. Neither Lee, Dee, nor Kara would discuss it, though Kara seemed to be extremely regretful over what had happened.

Adama did his duty shift on the bridge for the day. He was relieved by his new XO, Karl "Helo" Agathon, and he went back to his quarters to grab some rack time. In the same cell as she always was the Cylon prisoner Sharon, who had become distant from everyone these days. If she was human, he could understand it, having lost a child himself. But she was Cylon, so how could she truly understand pain?

He shoved those thoughts into a crevice in his mind as he entered his quarters. He tossed his uniform jacket onto a chair and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth. Once that was done, he got his razor and shaved his face. As he had done that morning, he looked at his face in the mirror and contemplated again shaving his mustache. "Only if a miracle comes along." Adama said to himself as he put his shaving kit up and washed his face.

Before he had gone off duty, though, he had sent Margaret "Racetrack" Edmonson out with a Raptor to scout out their next jump coordinates. As he slept, he had no way of knowing what she was about to stumble upon. What she would find would give him plenty of reason to shave that mustache off and to regain the hope he had lost when the Cylons took New Caprica.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Three A Day Full Of Surprises

September 6, 2214

9am

Earth Defense Force Headquarters

"On this, my last day of service to the Earth Defense Forces, my thoughts are of the long and distinguished line of officers who served under me, to whom I owe the credit for our greatest triumphs." General Charles Singleton knew that those in the room were barely listening to his speech and just waiting for him to retire so they could run the Earth Defense Force without his interference anymore. The retiring supreme commander of all Earth's forces looked around the room and had to fight not to bring up the pleasant breakfast he had ate with his daughter Wendy earlier that morning. She was waiting in the wings, along with the retired Captain Derek Wildstar. It was that thought that settled his stomach down enough for him to continue.

"Avatar, Stone, Gideon, Yamanami, Mizutani, the Wildstars...those names are justly famous and will live on long after mine is forgotten!" Singleton knew he had been a more than capable commanding officer, but he had to admit that, when compared to those he had named, he felt less of a man. Captain Abraham Avatar, who had led the mission to Iscandar fifteen years before and died just before they could land back on Earth after the yearlong journey, had been a long time friend and drinking partner at the pub near EDF HQ. Smiley's was still open, but he hadn't been able to go back in there for a pint of Guinness ever since his friend's passing.

Brigadier General Thomas Stone was retiring with Singleton, but he wasn't there. He had volunteered to stay at the office to make sure that some of Singleton's most private files didn't find their way into the hands of those that Singleton didn't want to see such information. They used to be adversaries, but, ever since the defeat of the Comet Empire, they had become closer. Stone had been all for stopping the Star Force from taking the Yamato when the EDF Council disregarded the distress signal that they had received. If Singleton hadn't stood in Stone's way...

"They were men of spirit and conviction. And gentlemen, I am sad to say that their line ends with you!" Singleton knew what he was about to say was going to cause a scene, but he didn't

care. The truth needed to be shoved down these do-nothing bureaucrats that the president, in his supposedly infinite wisdom, had appointed to the EDF Council. And, since Singleton was going to go out with his rank intact, he decided to go out with thunder and lightning.

“The Gamilon War galvanized the Interspace Committee into the EDF. The five years of fire honed it into the greatest force in all of Earth’s history, and the years since have a pack of stagnant, ambivalent, short-sighted bureaucrats who can’t see past the status quo!”

“How dare you, sir!” yapped General Didier Beauchamps, and Singleton smiled. Beauchamps was a bureaucrat’s bureaucrat, who loved to tell those military personnel he considered beneath him exactly what kind of lower life form they were. They had never gotten along in all their years in the military, and Singleton knew of some of Beauchamps’ constant critiques of his command, despite being always properly polite and orderly in front of his CO.

“HOW DARE YOU, SIR!!!” Singleton roared at Beauchamps, who put up a hand instinctively in defense of the verbal onslaught. “You carped and complained about wasting resources, when all you have done is hinder us in keeping up our military forces to a level to meet the kind of threats we might face in the future!”

“We have no enemies in this galaxy, sir, so why waste resources when we won’t need them?” Beauchamps retorted, albeit weakly.

He would have done better if he’d kept his mouth shut!, thought Singleton as he replied, “Did it ever occur to you that the Comet Empire came from outside our galaxy? And what about the Dark Nebulans? And how about the Dinguil? Need I go on?”

Beauchamps must have taken the hint, because he sat back down and kept quiet, as did the rest of the council. Singleton could tell that they wanted to say to him that he should go to hell, but they were afraid of getting their heads snapped off.

“I disagree on your assertion about the maintenance of our military forces is a waste of resources, and, unfortunately for all of you, my retirement allows me a decisive veto in the matter!”

“You don’t mean...” uttered General Royce Albion, whose name belied his thick Texas accent which came out even thicker when it hit him as to what Singleton was about to do.

“Clause 850.” Singleton said pointedly, “A retiring officer with sufficient seniority can appoint his own successor.” He could tell that the council realized at that moment just who he had in mind, and their fears were confirmed when the young redheaded woman came into the chambers.

“Like it or not, gentlemen, that successor is my granddaughter and protégé, Wendy Singleton Glitchman. I confer all my duties upon her as of this moment! Wendy?” Singleton’s smile was partly warm at the thought of his granddaughter taking over for him, and partly a shark’s smile at what the council was about to have done onto them. Wendy may be young, but she was far from naïve.

“Good morning, gentlemen! I accept my appointment under clause 850!” And it was then that Wendy got on with the meeting. There wasn’t a whole lot of meat and potatoes to the agenda, but Wendy made it clear very quickly that underneath her figurative velvet glove was a fist harder than iron.

The last item on the agenda was where the real surprise lay, though. “Do you have a status report on our new flagship, Chief Yamazaki?” You wouldn’t know it from most of his features, but the chief did actually have some Japanese blood running through his veins. His father was full-blooded Japanese, but he loved American culture so much that he moved there years before the Gamilon War started. There he met his future wife, a spicy Irish redheaded architect named Maeve Donegal, who gave birth to four kids, with Duncan Yamazaki being the youngest son.

The tall, barrel-chested Japanese-Irishman nodded to the new CO, then made his way to a console in front of a giant display screen. He pressed a few buttons, and some schematics appeared on the screen. “Andromeda II’s engines passed their final readiness tests yesterday, ma’am. She’s completely space worthy. When the council has time to consider it, I’d like to request a commendation for my crew. They haven’t left the shipyard in almost a month!”

The council members looked like that they’d rather give the people who picked up their garbage the commendation than the hard working crew that Yamazaki led. But that debate never got off the ground when Wendy said, “They’ll have it, Chief! Good work!”

Wendy turned to the council and said, “Gentlemen, I would like Andromeda II’s first mission to be a shakedown cruise to the sectors indicated in your morning dossiers.”

Albion interjected, “But this is outrageous! We commissioned that ship for executive privilege! Our first inspection tour of the solar system has been on the agenda for months!” This was a critical moment early on in Wendy’s command, and a lot would ride on how she would handle this bit of dissention within the ranks.

She didn’t even hesitate. “If your executive privilege is such a priority, then perhaps you’d like to embark on both missions?” Wendy said icily. “Of course, the tour can commence immediately upon her return.”

“Ouch! You created a monster!” Derek whispered to the now-retired Singleton, who replied, “That was all her idea!”

Wendy looked around with a stern look, then said, “No one? You disappoint me, gentlemen!” She looked over at Derek, then turned back and added, “I’d like someone else to speak now. I’m certain his name alone is adequate introduction.”

Virtual daggers filled the room up as Derek Wildstar was introduced by his longtime friend. The council had no love whatsoever for him, and the feeling was mutual. Derek had no patience for politics, but if he had, he could have been elected president for life with the way the public admired and loved the Star Force, especially its leader. He chuckled at the memory of so many women expressing chagrin at Derek marrying Nova ten years before. Speaking of that slim, sexy blond he called his wife, she also stood waiting in the wings, along with several other surviving members of the old Star Force. As he walked over to Wendy, he gestured to the assembled commanding officers of the fleet in attendance, of which Nova was one of those captains.

After officially offering his congratulations to Wendy, Derek turned to the council and began his remarks. “As one who has encountered and dealt with many threats, I was asked in my capacity as advisor to the council to offer my opinion. I’ll be brief.” Derek took a pause to survey the room, and noted that, while all of them were less than fond of him, they were also giving him their undivided attention.

“To a captain, instinct is everything. I’ve got the same sense about this one as I did about the Comet Empire.” He couldn’t help but get that dig in after having his concerns about it fourteen years ago so blithely dismissed. While not all members of the council had been there when they discussed the distress signal, a few were, and they were squirming uncomfortably in their seats.

Derek continued, “While there may be no direct threats to Earth now, there is no way we can ever let our guard down ever again. We knew how quickly the Gamilons struck and almost decimated us, we know how close we were to falling to the Comet Empire, and we were forced to surrender to the Dark Nebulans. We lost many good men and women because of those conflicts, and I cannot simply sit by and let you scale back the EDF because the memories of those we lost would haunt me if I did that.

“I was asked to lend my support in a direct manner, and I am here to do just that. Now more than ever, we need a strong EDF, and the Andromeda II will be the backbone of our force. As you know, I took leave from the rank of captain eight years ago. The needs of my family were a greater priority for me than the patrolling of a peaceful solar system.

“The situation has now changed, and my leave has always been indefinite.” The room was rapt up in expectation, and Derek didn’t hold them in suspense. “But after much thought...I’ve decided to keep it that way.”

A buzz went around the room, not suspecting that Derek would turn down the reins of the flagship. Wendy knew, of course, so she showed no reaction. The council members were divided between shock and relief, but Derek had another ace up his sleeve.

“Therefore, I wish to defer my nomination to someone with more recent experience...” Derek turned and looked over at the other captains, “...Captain Nova Forrester!”

Nova was shocked, to say the least. She barely got out “Derek...I...” as her mouth hung open. Her executive officer patted her on the shoulder and said, “Captain Forrester, as your friend and XO, I give you my full support for the mission! Crew?”

Members of her crew, who had stood behind the assembled fleet captains, said, “Captain, we volunteer to serve with you on the mission!” “We’re with you!” “Right behind you, boss!”

Wendy turned to Nova and made the offer official. “Captain Forrester, I would like to offer you command of Andromeda II. Naturally, if you need time to consider...”

Nova nervously said, “I...I accept, commander! My crew and I are willing to set sail immediately!” Her crew laughed at the old adage, which was still used because most of the fleet was not only capable of spaceflight, but also of actually sailing in an ocean, because the main space dock was a harbor just outside of Megalopolis.

Wendy dismissed the meeting, and the various members of the council made their way out as the crew and captains celebrated Nova’s new command. Albion, though, wasn’t in the mood to celebrate, and led the council members to a side conference room to discuss matters further.

“The president can’t stand for this! Damned Singleton had to go and appoint his own daughter to the role of supreme commander! What does she know of combat?” Albion said.

“Many people are getting sick and tired of the way things are being run, my friend. Why even bother having a council anymore, when our decisions are just ignored? Derek Wildstar didn’t take the command because he has a greater goal in mind!” Beauchamps added.

“If they keep it up, they won’t get the chance to meet any of their goals!” said General Maurice Fielding, commandant of the EDF Marine Corps. “The president still can’t see because of the way the public loves the Star Force. It’s time we realized that they can’t be brought into line anymore!”

“What do you mean? You want to kill them?” Albion asked.

“Why not? We don’t have to kill them all at once. A little accident here, a minor glitch in the warp system there, and... voila!... you have yourself an EDF free of the Star Force.” Fielding said boldly.

Beauchamps said in his crisp French accent, “You have got to be out of your mind!”

Fielding retorted with his own crisp accent, this one fresh from Oxford, where his father had been professor before the Gamilon War, “Not in the least. Think, each of you, what will happen the longer Wendy Singleton Glitchman serves as supreme commander! Derek Wildstar’s influence will grow, and it can only lead him to become president. If he were ever to become commander-in-chief, all we have been doing under the radar will be exposed!”

“You have a point! But we can’t be too obvious about this, if we decide to do this. This would be tantamount to a coup d’etat, and, if we fail, we’d be executed!” Albion said.

“Better to die than to be rendered useless, I say!” Fielding said, as he put one finger to his lips and hushed those in the room. They waited as the celebrants passed before continuing. “Look, let’s not do anything right now. We have some space to work in before we have to commit to a path, one way or another. Who knows, maybe the president will realize that the supreme commander isn’t up to the job!”

“But if she’s as good as she was today?” Albion asked.

“Then we take care of her!” Fielding said.

Phoenix Lake Station

Location: Classified

September 5, 2214

2:30pm

Commander Steven Sandor was still amazed that he had managed to find her after all these years. Singleton had dispatched him and a select crew to find the remains of Yamato and bring them back. They had managed to find the rogue water world of Aquarius and were able to bring up the wreckage of the ship, as well as the remains of Captain Abraham Avatar, who had given his life and that of the ship to prevent Earth being flooded by the passing planet.

Now, Yamato was encased in a massive block of ice. This was to mask the thermal signature of the ship’s engines, which were brand new. Not even the president knew of Wendy and Derek’s secret operation out here, and it was best that the chief executive be kept in the dark about this.

“IQ-9, where are you?” Sandor asked into the communications link on his console.

"I'm topside, Commander, and I am checking on the communications array on the platform above the ice."

"How does it check out?"

The robot replied, "Everything is okay, sir! It seems like the transmission we picked up from the relay satellite in sector 452 was not a glitch!"

Sandor scratched his chin, then leaned back for a moment in his chair to think. After a moment, he leaned back and spoke into the microphone, "So what were the names of those ships again?"

"Galactica and Pegasus were the main ones I picked up, Sandor. There were others, but those were the two who sent the most transmissions between each other as well as the rest of the fleet."

Sandor's mind raced over as many reasonable explanations as he could find. As far as he knew, there had never been a ship named Galactica in any EDF fleet nor had any civilian ship bore the name. Pegasus, on the other hand, was one of the first space battleships destroyed in the war against the Gamillions. No one had survived, and the ship had been destroyed in a surprise attack in Martian orbit, ten years before Yamato launched on her fateful mission.

The attack spacecraft carrier EDS Algeria came to the station. Her captain, Paulina Borcelli, was a beautiful Italian woman who had once been his girlfriend when they were at the academy. Their relationship ended amicably and they were now old friends, and Sandor had advised Derek to bring her on board about this secret mission.

"How is the old lady, Steven?" Paulina asked.

"Doing well. We have the ship's superstructure back together, strengthened with the new alloys that I developed back home." Sandor replied.

Paulina smiled warmly and said, "I always knew you were a hell of an engineer!"

Sandor joked, "But I hope I'm not a rambling wreck!"

Paulina laughed out loud and hugged her old friend, "If my dad were still here, he'd cuss you out! He was a die hard Georgia fan and hated Georgia Tech with a passion!" They embraced for a bit, enjoying the company. They looked into each other's eyes for a moment, and things became a bit awkward.

Sandor then thought of what happened earlier. "Listen, I need a favor from you. I hate to ask..."

"Steven, whatever it is, I'm game! What is it?"

"Well, we received a signal from sector 452, and we picked up some chatter in English."

"English? That's an unknown sector of space! Far as I know, no one's ever explored it!"

Sandor nodded and said, "Would you be up for taking the Algeria out there and checking it out? Last thing I would want is anyone discovering what we had here!"

Before Paulina could reply, she got a signal from her ship. "Captain! We just had an unknown fleet of ships jump into this sector. They're eight hours away, but they are headed in our direction!"

"Could it be them?" Sandor said as an aside.

"I'll be back shortly, Commander. I'm bringing up a passenger, so make the VIP guest quarters ready!"

"Affirmative, Captain. Bierkmann out!"

Paulina turned to Sandor and said, "This could very well be them. Let's hope for our sakes that they're not hostile!"

Command Information Center
Battlestar Galactica

Admiral William Adama pointed to two unidentified objects on the DRADIS that were close together and asked Racetrack, "Is that what you found?"

"Sort of, sir. There wasn't any other ship there when I stumbled upon that chunk of ice."

Adama turned to the Raptor pilot and said, "That confirms that there's someone there. Who and what they are, though." Adama took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes as he thought to himself. "So why would someone have an artificial island on an iceberg in the middle of nowhere? I don't think the Cylons would do something like that."

Helo added, "Never know, sir. With the way this war's been..."

"Point taken, Mr. Agathon." Adama put his glasses back on, looked back at the DRADIS, and issued an order, "Launch the alert Vipers, Helo, and set condition two throughout the ship!"

"Aye, sir!" Helo responded and carried out the order.

They were lucky to have eight pilots for the alert. Pegasus sent out her alert Vipers as well. Within fifteen minutes, one of the objects began to move away from the other.

"Sir, it looks like that we're about to have company!" Helo said.

"Action stations! Set condition one throughout the ship! Patch me through to the Pegasus!" Soon enough, Adama was on the phone with his son, who commanded the more modern battlestar.

"We've seen it too, sir! It's moving this way, and it looks like they're launching fighters!" Captain Lee "Apollo" Adama said.

"But no Cylon recognition signals on your DRADIS?" the older Adama asked.

"Negative, sir! Could they be from Earth?"

"Well, we're about to see, aren't we? Have your pilots hold fire unless fired upon, and I'll instruct mine to do the same."

Apollo sighed and said, "You're taking an awfully big risk, sir!"

"I know. Trust me on this one, Lee."

Apollo thought for a moment, then said, "I will, Dad. Pegasus out!"

Tensely and nervously, Adama and the CIC crew watched as the fighters from both battlestars began to make their way towards the unknown fighters. "Ten clicks and closing!" Louanne "Kat" Katraine said over the wireless as her Viper squadron rapidly approached the unknown fighters.

Adama had never imagined he'd ever meet anyone out here, except maybe more Cylons. He didn't know for sure if this was a Cylon trap, but his gut was screaming at him that it wasn't one. He hoped, for the sakes of the Gods as well as those Viper pilots, that his gut was right.

"Five clicks and closing, sir." Helo called out in an even voice. Adama nodded as his eyes continued to be locked on the DRADIS display. His heart was racing, but, somehow, he managed to stay calm as the fighters grew closer and closer with every second that passed.

"Any word from them, Helo?" Adama said, not even noticing that he was using Agathon's call sign instead of his surname.

"No sir. Not yet anyway. We're trying to contact them on all frequencies, but no luck yet."

Frustration welled up inside Adama and he clenched his fist because of it. For all he knew, those could be fighters from Earth. Or it could easily be a trap set up by the Cylons. Or it could be an alien species.

"They're within visual range, sir! We're picking up chatter from their pilots back to their ships!" Helo announced.

"Can we make out what they're saying?" Adama said.

Helo pressed the earphones to his head as he fine-tuned his equipment to better hear through the static. "Having trouble making it out, sir."

"Keep at it!" Adama picked up the phone and spoke directly to Kat. "Kat, what's up?"

"We're about to pass them, sir. Can't tell if they're running weapons hot or not." Kat paused for a little while, and Adama was just about to say something when Kat came over the wireless again, "Sir! Those are humans in those fighters, but those fighters aren't Colonial Vipers! But I can make out the markings on them!"

"Can you make contact with them, Kat? We are barely picking up a signal here." Adama said.

"Trying to contact them, sir!" Kat began to fiddle with her communication headset, "This is Colonial Battlestar Galactica to unknown fighters. Please identify yourselves." She repeated that over and over again as she turned her Viper around to head back to where the unknown fighters were. They were doing likewise, and were about to pass again.

A crackle came over the wireless. "This is Cosmo Tiger pilot James Allen to Colonial fighters. We are from the Earth Defense Force."

He was about to say more, but Kat interrupted him and said, "Did you say...Earth?" with a breathless voice, not believing what she was hearing.

"Confirmed, we are from the Earth Defense Force. This is a restricted area of space. Request we send over a team to board to meet with you."

Adama got on the phone again and said, "Kat, tell them they're welcome aboard!" He was about to add some more out of his smiling mouth when the glorious moment was about to be spoiled.

Adama had spotted them a beat before Helo cried out, "Sir! We've got two Cylon basestars that have jumped in!" The Earth fighters began to move towards the Cylon basestars alongside the Colonial Vipers. Waves upon waves of Cylon raiders came after them. On board EDS Algeria

Captain Paulina Borcelli and Steven Sandor were watching as the two Cylon basestars made their way towards the Colonial fleet, ignoring the attack spacecraft carrier. "Do they know we're out here?" Borcelli asked her XO, Commander Dwayne Ross. The black skinned American replied, "Doesn't look like it, Captain! What are your orders?"

"Let's make ourselves known then. Power up shock cannons and bring up to within firing range of the nearest large craft! Bring the pulse laser batteries online and have them ready should their fighters come towards us!"

The Algeria moved closer to one of the basestars as they made their way towards the Galactica and Pegasus. "Do we have a firing solution yet on the nearest craft?" Borcelli asked.

Her combat chief, Ian Chambers, said, "Yes, ma'am! We have them locked on target! Fighters are clear!"

"Fire!" Borcelli said, and, moments later, all four forward shock cannon batteries opened up on the closest basestar. They slammed into the center of the basestar and ruptured parts of the hull. "Massive damage to the nearest capital ship, Captain! They're moving to engage us!" Ross said.

Radar chief Vanessa Donacech added, "They've launched missiles at us, ma'am!"

Borcelli ordered, "Launch countermeasure missiles!" The interceptors blasted out of their tubes and headed towards the large Cylon missiles fired at the carrier. Borcelli then ordered another shock cannon volley, and the beams slammed into the upper spokes, breaking one of them off from the impact.

Galactica and Pegasus were attacking the other basestar, but were taking a beating. Suddenly, a bad situation turned from bad to worse, as three other basestars jumped in.

Sandor had a thought, "Paulina, we should use the wave motion gun!"

"What?!? Steven, are you mad?" Borcelli replied.

"No, not quite. Their fleet is clear out of our line of fire. Tell them to move back and recall their fighters. We'll do the same and let them have it without wave motion gun!"

Borcelli looked around at her crew for opposition, and, upon seeing none, nodded and ordered the engineer to begin powering up the gun by switching energy over from the engines.

On board Pegasus

“What the frak are they doing?” Captain Lee “Apollo” Adama asked of no one.

XO Lieutenant Anastasia “Dee” Dualla replied, “They look like they’re powering up their main guns, Captain! From what our sensors are reading, they’re building up a massive amount of energy towards the front of their ship.” Dee got a signal coming into her earpiece. “Captain, its Admiral Adama!”

Apollo picked up the phone to speak to his father. “Yes, sir?”

“They’ve asked us to recall our fighters and move back. What do you recommend, Captain?” Adama knew that the Pegasus had better sensors than Galactica did.

“They’re powering up their main guns, sir. From what we can tell, they’re packing quite a punch! They’ve recalled their fighters as well.”

Adama thought for a moment, then said, “Order the fighters back and reverse course. They may not get them all, so we’d better be ready to take over what’s left of the fleet!” Adama hung up the phone, and Apollo soon followed.

“Captain! I’m picking up energy readings off the charts! Whatever their weapon is, it’s something we’ve never seen!” Dee’s eyes went from DRADIS screen to the sensors on her console, trying to make sense of what she was seeing.

Then the Algeria fired her wave motion guns, and the electromagnetic pulse from the energy caused the systems on both Colonial battlestars to go out briefly. When the power came back on, Dee got the DRADIS system back up. What she saw stunned her.

“Sir! They’re...they’re gone!”

“The Earth ship?” Apollo asked.

“No sir! The Cylon basestars! They’re gone!” Dee replied.

On board Galactica

Admiral Adama couldn’t believe it. “Whoo-HOO! Did you see that, Hot Dog? That Earth ship shot...whatever the hell that was...at those frakking toasters and fried them up good!” yelled a jubilant Kat.

“What the frak was that, anyway? All I saw was a bright light, and then, when it cleared, those five basestars were gone! But that’s one hell of a debris field!” Hot Dog replied.

Helo turned to his CO and asked, “Sir, what should we do now?”

Adama thought for a moment, then said, “Ask them to send a team to come aboard. I want to meet them, and I want to find out what the hell they hit those Cylons with!” Helo went to comply, leaving Adama alone with his thoughts. While he was glad that the five basestars were

dispatched, such a weapon on a ship as small as that one troubled him, and he wanted to be sure that he could trust these people.

Roughly an hour later, Adama was on the flight deck, and waited along with his son as the Earth transport opened up and deployed a ramp. Out stepped a tall older male with graying dark hair, as well as a woman in a blue uniform jacket with a large white anchor on her left breast. A few others stepped out as well. Adama walked towards them with a smile on his face, but was stopped in his tracks at the sight of IQ-9.

He hadn't intended for his first words to a human to be a loudly asked question, "What the hell is that thing?" Adama pointed towards the robot.

Borcelli and Sandor were both caught flat-footed, not expecting a question like that. Sandor managed to rally and say, "That's IQ-9. He's a robot. He's on our side."

Adama replied, "If you only knew..."

In time, Adama would understand that IQ-9 was not of the Cylons, but he couldn't help but steer clear of the red-colored robot. Their ragtag fleet made their way towards Phoenix Station. Sandor had just brought the Adamas into the main control room when word came from Earth: the Andromeda II was missing!

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Four

Murphy's Law

September 7, 2214

Aboard EDS Andromeda II

In Earth orbit

Captain Nova Forrester was understandably nervous as she took the command chair for the launch out of Earth orbit. She knew she didn't need to be, because this was a simple shakedown cruise. Commander Wendy Singleton (who had received a promotion to the rank of general from the Senate as part of a arm-wrangling deal that her grandfather engineered) had given her the mission objectives that morning: three warps to an uncharted world that one of the EDS probes had discovered years before during the search for a new home during the Gamilon Wars. As far as the probe had indicated, no life had lived there. But life was possible there, though it would be hard as the habitable zone was relatively small, rainy, and cold.

Nevertheless, it was a definite prospect for a base outside of the home system, and Nova was eager to embark on this voyage of discovery. She knew that, just in case, she had the skills to deal with a combat situation, but she didn't expect to have to worry about that on this mission. Nothing was taken for granted, though, so Andromeda II was armed to the teeth.

She always hated departures, and this one was no different. Miyuki no longer cried (at least in front of her) when she left on a mission, but Nova knew that her daughter missed her deeply whenever she was away. She also missed her husband, Derek, because she knew the pressure that he was under despite no longer being a member of the military officially.

She did know, of course, of the secret project at Phoenix Station. Derek was scheduled to leave there in three days to pay the site a visit along with Wendy. Part of her was uncomfortable bring up the Yamato from its watery resting place on the water world of Aquaria, but she knew that the day may come when the old lady would once again be needed.

Her executive officer, Homer Glitchman, handed her the daily report and she scanned through it, thinking of the night before, when Homer and her were at her place, celebrating a surprising announcement from Homer's wife.

They were at the Wildstar's for a going away dinner. Derek and Homer were going to cook dinner (or attempt to, at least) for Wendy, Nova, and Miyuki. Miyuki was in her room, playing, while Wendy and Nova were out on the balcony talking.

"I always wondered why you bought this house, Nova. After what you went through here..." Wendy said, remembering what had happened to Nova a dozen years ago when the Dark Nebulans had invaded and captured Earth. The Star Force that had been on Earth had managed to escape aboard the president's personal emergency transport, but Nova had barely missed getting on board.

Nova's smile slipped a bit as she said, "It took some convincing. I decided that I didn't want to think of any place on Earth as a house of pain." While she had not been tortured at all during her interrogation at the hands of the enemy, the officer who had her in custody had tempted her, and he would eventually betray his own people for Nova. In all the years since, she'd never come that close to cheating on Derek again. Even though Derek had long since told her that she had done nothing wrong and that there was no need to forgive her, Nova still felt the twinge of guilt whenever that time came up.

She rallied and added, "Derek and I have made plenty of happy memories here to outnumber the good ones." One of those memories came out of her room and asked her mommy to hug her.

Wendy looked down at young Miyuki and smiled. "I hope Homer and I can do so as well. We've decided to start our own family as well when you're all back from this mission."

Nova gasped with delight, saying, "Wendy, that's wonderful! Even with your new career?"

"As usual, Homer wants to follow Derek's example. Did you ever imagine those two as full time fathers?" Wendy laughed.

They had even more reason to laugh when they detected a smell of smoke from the kitchen and the sight of Homer coming out of there saying, "Uh...you ladies mind if we call out for pizza?" Derek called out to Homer from inside the kitchen, "Homer! Get back in here and help me stomp this out!"

Nova smiled at the memory of the night, but was interrupted from her daydreams by her exec addressing headquarters. "EDF Control, this is Andromeda II. We have cleared atmosphere and we're on course for the warp corridor."

"Read you, Homer. How does the crew like their new home?"

"I think 'kid in a candy store' sums it all up." Homer said, then added, "Captain Forrester has a private message for Commander Singleton. Stand by."

Wendy turned on the video communications panel on her desk and Nova's image came up. "Wendy...thank you for lending him to me. I'll bring him back home to you safely."

Wendy smiled and said, "I know you will, Nova. Good luck!"

Little did they know that the evening before would be the last time they would see each other in that tranquil of a setting. Two days later, Wendy was summoned that communication had been lost with the ship. She raced to EDF control, and wasn't surprised in the least to see Derek Wildstar come in minutes later.

"Where's Miyuki?" Wendy asked.

"She's with the neighbors. I didn't tell her what had come up. Any news?"

Wendy shrugged and said, "All we know is that they had warped in close to the planet we had detected, and had found unknown ships nearby. Before they could investigate, another ship jumped in behind them and hit them with missiles. Last message we received was that they were going down."

Derek went through a ton of emotions in millisecond: rage, fear, worry, anger, and so on. The probe had determined that the planet was lifeless and was safe to explore. But the probe had gone out years ago and had descended onto the planet to self-destruct, so they had not had any new information for some time.

"What do we do now?" Derek asked.

Wendy thought for a moment, then asked, "Is the old lady ready for another mission?"

Derek replied, "Sandor said that they were almost ready for a shakedown cruise. If we can get the others to come along with us, we can find out what really happened."

New Caprica Settlement (under Cylon occupation)

"What the frak is this?" said Chief Galen Tyrol as he kneeled down beside a ditch in the forest where the resistance fighters had fled when they made their breakaway from the main settlement.

Kara "Starbuck" Thrace crouched down beside him and studied what the ditch contained. "Looks like something crashed here. Whatever it was, it hit hard, but there's quite a lot of it still intact. Think you could salvage something from it, Chief?"

Tyrol looked it over carefully, lost in thought for a moment. He then jumped down into the pit and looked it over up close. "I'm not sure. Maybe we could get some sort of electronic gear from this. Components..." He then looked over at one of the panels that had survived and his breath caught inside him. "Holy frak!"

"What is it?" Starbuck said as she jumped in with him. Tyrol pointed to the panel and Starbuck read the writing on it. "Earth Defense Force Probe XP-1791? Earth? It can't be!"

“Could it be a trick?” said a voice from above. Tyrol and Starbuck both looked up to see Colonel Saul Tigh standing above them. “I wouldn’t put it past the Cylons to do set up something like this to trick us!”

Starbuck shook her head and replied, “I don’t think so, sir! I’m not sure when this probe crashed here, but my guess is that it’s been here for quite a while, long before the Cylons attacked the Colonies.”

Tigh, despite his years, managed to come down into the crater as well, and looked for himself. “Why is the writing in the Colonial language, though? This seems a little too convenient to me!”

“That could be, but look at the weathering on this thing.” Starbuck said. “The Cylons are capable of many things, but even they didn’t know of this planet until they detected that nuke that destroyed Cloud Nine a few months back.”

Just then, Tom Zarek, who was still technically the vice president of the Colonies, came by and said, “Something’s going on in the skies, Starbuck. A ship’s descending, and it looks like it’s been shot up pretty bad!”

“Galactica!” both Tigh and Starbuck said simultaneously. Zarek shook his head and replied, “No, this definitely doesn’t look like a Colonial ship, nor anything from the Cylons. Come on! You need to see this!”

They raced through the forest towards an opening near the shore of a massive bay. Starbuck searched the skies and quickly found the ship as it headed towards the coastline. “That’s definitely not Colonial! She looks like her stern’s been shot up pretty bad!”

Tigh managed to see the Cylon raiders a heartbeat before Starbuck did. “Duck!” he commanded, and the threesome hit the dirt as the raiders swung near their position and headed for the stricken ship. But they were quickly dispatched by what looked like beam weapons of some sort, which had all three of them puzzled.

“Could they be from Earth?” Starbuck asked aloud.

“Doubtful. Maybe it’s an alien race...” Zarek said.

“Maybe they are from Earth.” Tigh said. “We found a probe from Earth in that ditch where you found us. Looks like it’s been there for a few years, so I doubt it’s a Cylon trick.”

Zarek shot Tigh a puzzled expression, asking, “How do you know?”

It was Starbuck who was the one who answered. “We read an inscription on it that said so. When we go back, we’ll show it to you. Right now, get everyone up here, Tom. They need to see this!” Zarek nodded and went back to where the rest of the resistance group was hidden, while Starbuck and Tigh watched on as the gigantic ship made its way towards the bay.

Back in the settlement, Graham Walter was teaching the high school class with his wife Cassie when the commotion drew his attention. “What the hell is going on out there?” he said aloud, then he had a thought and addressed the class, “Stay in your seats!” The class moaned as he went outside with his wife to check out what was going on.

As Graham opened the tent flap and went outside, he spotted his old friend, Laura Roslin, whose entire class was standing outside the adjacent classroom. He walked up to the former president and asked, "What the hell is going on, Laura?"

Laura pointed to the sky and said, "A ship is descending, according to what I've heard. It's not Colonial, and it's not Cylon. But it's been shot up, probably by the Cylons."

Walter shook his head and said, "What the hell is next? Earthers coming down to beat back the Cylons?"

Cassie added, "Never know, hun. Those could be people from the thirteenth colony."

He turned to say something to his tall, red headed wife, but Walter spotted his class near the door of the tent that served as their school. "Bah! I can't blame them for wanting to look!" He turned to them and said, "Don't come out any further, people! They may have to order us off the streets, so be ready to get back in quickly if they do."

Inside Colonial One, four Cylons and President Baltar watched as the ship continued to descend towards the mountains in the distance. The most recent arrival, who looked a lot like former Fleet News Service reporter D'anna Biers, said, "Whatever it is, we need to destroy it soon, or else those escapees might make some sort of alliance with the survivors."

The Aaron Doral copy, who was known as "Five", said, "Three, we've tried to attack it after the basestar jumped in from behind and launched missiles at its stern, but the ship is bristled with what looks like beam weaponry. None of our raiders can get close enough to finish it off."

Three turned back and said rather brusquely, "Well, when it lands, we need to bomb it, because the last thing we need is for the Colonial resistance to get their hands on some advanced weaponry."

The Sharon model, known as an "Eight", added, "We should be prepared for an attack. For all we know, Galactica has contacted the entity to which that ship belongs and has made some sort of an alliance."

Three replied, "And so we shall, but we should also prepare to make sure that the settlement isn't taken by whatever beings are in that ship."

Baltar chose that moment to interject. "You said that if we didn't attack you, you wouldn't harm us. What happens if whomever is on that ship figures out that you attacked it and decides to come after you?"

Three walked over to him, stared at him with a look that bordered on revulsion, and said, "What you had better worry about is if those escapees decide to join them, because, if they do...well, the consequences for your people will be grave."

On board Andromeda II

Captain Nova Forrester wasn't worried about whether or not she was going to survive or not. All she was concerned about was making sure that they could get the ship down in one piece. The thrusters on the bottom side of the hull were being tricky, and Ashley "Ace" Diamond was leading his engineering team to try and fix the problem. Their heat shield had managed to work fine, but now that they were in the gravitational pull and the atmosphere of a planet again, that brought about a whole new set of problems.

Homer called out in excitement, "Captain! We have the wings operational!"

Nova simply nodded and ordered, "Deploy them!", too busy to say much else as she was locked in concentration on her data screens, giving her information from all over the ship. So far, twelve people had been killed and thirty-four injured when whatever ship that had jumped behind them slammed missiles into their stern, catching them by almost complete surprise. Nova's instincts had told her that the enemy hadn't expected her to be there, and they were not able to fully put paid to them. They had thrown some fighters at them, but the pulse lasers had taken them out.

Helmsman Jordan "Jordie" Venture was guiding the ship towards a splashdown in the bay that was rapidly approaching them. Nova had decided to try and sail the ship to shore and make a stand there, getting near a heavily forested area just in case they had to ditch the ship and activate the self-destruct systems. But the spotty altitude controls were making his job very difficult indeed, and Venture was having a hard time maintaining a safe approach vector to the water.

Thankfully, Diamond's team had managed to give Venture enough thrusters to allow him to ease the ship as best he could into the water. "All hands, stand by for disembarking procedures!" Nova said over the ship's intercom. Her objective was to get some of her crew out into the woods and prepare for any possible ground assault by the enemy.

Her plans were abruptly changed when a missile slammed into the ocean a quarter of a mile behind the ship, and the explosion lifted the massive ship out of the water. "Captain! That missile came from space!" Wallace "Whizzer" Makunochi called out from his radar station.

Nova didn't hesitate, as she feared that the enemy might fire down upon them from space. "Attention all hands. Change of plans! As soon as we run aground, abandon ship! Repeat, abandon ship!" She then turned to her combat chief, Namio Sakamaki, and ordered him to use the pulse cannons to take out as many of the incoming missiles as he could until she gave the order for the last of the bridge crew to leave.

The crew may not have been on the ship for very long, but they were a well-oiled machine from their time on the Avatar, and they carried out Nova's evacuation order to perfection as the ship grounded itself on the shore. She had launched fighters before splashdown, giving them enough cover as they made their way towards shore. The gangplank was let down and the crew began to storm the beach with equipment for long-term survival on the planet. The EDF Marines hustled to bring down armaments as quickly as they could, while the medical team brought down the wounded along with as much of the medical supplies and equipment as they could carry.

The flight crew did what they could to hastily assemble a makeshift runway for the fighters, and Nova was thankful that the fighters didn't need much of one to land, as they could land vertically like the ancient Harrier jump jets from the twentieth century. She had them assembled a good distance away from the ship, just to try and give them as much of a buffer zone when she set off the self-destruct sequence.

Within the space of half an hour, all that was left on board was the bridge crew. She set the subspace distress beacon and let it transmit for as long as it could before she had to destroy her new ship. Initially, she had decided to just get her people clear and then set it off, but a report from one of the fighter pilots gave her a new idea.

Once they were all on shore, they got into the forest as quickly as they could. Nova, Homer, and the rest of the bridge crew, though, were ducked behind a quickly thrown up blind set on a little hill just inside the forest, waiting for what looked like robot soldiers to come to the ship. Her plan was simple: get as many of them inside the ship or close enough to it, then set it off. Science Officer Henji Bando had a portable computer plugged into the video surveillance system inside the ship, and he was tracking the enemy soldiers as they entered the ship. They had managed to seal off the more vital parts of the ship, which, while it didn't completely prevent them from getting into those areas, it would make them work for it.

Nova watched the monitor and had her finger poised over the button to set off the self-destruct sequence. When she was ready, she told her crew to get down, then she pressed the button, and the Andromeda II went up in a massive explosion within mere seconds, taking all of the robot soldiers who had gotten inside or near the ship. "Well, we're on our own, for now. Get the emergency communication system up and running as soon as possible. We need to establish a base camp near the fighters, then set up a defensive perimeter."

"Captain!" called out the familiar voice of EDF Marine master sergeant Winona Fowler. She was a stocky, tall, athletic woman who looked like the very definition of an Amazon. "We've encountered some humans here!"

"Humans? This planet isn't supposed to be colonized!" Nova said in a surprised voice. "Bring them forward, Sgt. Fowler."

Starbuck, Zarek, Tyrol, and Tigh were escorted to where Nova had set up the command and control tent. They ducked inside and stared at each other for a moment. Finally, Starbuck broke the silence and asked, "Are you from Earth?"

Nova looked at them and said, "Yes, we are. Aren't you?"

Starbuck sighed and said, "Not exactly. It's a long story, Captain..."

"Forrester. Captain Nova Forrester. And you are?"

"Kara Thrace, formerly Captain in the Colonial Fleet. Call sign 'Starbuck'." She turned to introduce Tigh and Zarek. "This is Colonel Saul Tigh, formerly assigned to the Colonial battlestar Galactica, and this is Tom Zarek, the vice president of the Colonies."

Homer asked, "Where's your president?"

Tigh answered a bit sharply, "He's back at the settlement, which is occupied by our enemy, a race of robots called the Cylons. They were the ones who shot your ship down. The president's a collaborator, as far as I can tell. Like Starbuck said, it's a long story."

Nova nodded and said, "Well, there's a saying on my world. 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend.' I believe we can help each other out, if you're up for it."

Starbuck walked up to Nova, stunned that such a beautiful woman was a commander of a starship, and extended her hand. "You've got a deal!" Nova smiled and shook it, placing her hand on top of it.

Back at the settlement, they had seen and felt the Andromeda II go up. "Damn!" said Graham to his wife as they walked back to their modest tent, which was next to Samuel Anders' place.

Samuel Anders was Kara's husband, but he had to stay behind because of his pneumonia. He had good days and bad, and this one looked to be one of his better ones. Cassie had been with Samuel and the rest of the Caprica Buccaneers pyramid team when the Cylons nuked Caprica, and had managed to survive long enough for Starbuck to pick them up over a year ago as part of a massive rescue mission.

"Any idea if Kara was near that explosion?" Sam asked with concern in his soft voice.

"No. No idea." Graham replied in a whisper. Not many people were around, but it was best that they kept their voices down. "Hopefully she wasn't near it when it went up."

Cassie added, "Hopefully they took some of those shiny toasters with them!"

"I know, but it's best to not call them that, hun. Gods know that if they found out what we are up to..." Graham replied.

Samuel asked, "When's the next meeting?"

"Soon. Roslin will want it to be discreet because of what happened, but we need to meet up again soon. Maybe have a few discreet meetings with the players involved." Graham added.

Cally came out of the tent and hugged Graham and Cassie, then got the gist of what was going on. The story was that Starbuck and Tyrol had had an affair and had run off together. No one in the inner circle thought it completely fooled the Cylons, but it did allow for the pregnant Cally to watch over Sam. She was almost ready to have her child, and Cassie would soon have to stay at home and help watch the both of them.

Tory Foster, Laura Roslin's former assistant when she was president, walked up to them and whispered into Graham's ear. "Laura needs to see you quickly!" Graham excused himself and followed Tory back to Laura's place.

Laura's tent was very much like everyone else's, for the most part. Quite a comedown for someone who used to be president of the Colonies, but it helped her to regain the popularity she had lost during the election campaign that Gaius Baltar had managed to win. Graham entered and saw Laura sitting down on the cot, with Dr. Cottle standing over her. "Graham! Good to see you again!" Laura said as she rose off the cot and embraced her friend.

"Likewise, Laura. So what's up?" he replied.

"I just talked to Felix Gaeta, the president's aide. It seems that the Cylons are not happy about that ship crashing. Apparently they think that there were survivors and that they may meet up with Starbuck's team." Laura said, worry in her voice.

"What does that have to do with us?" Graham asked.

Laura struggled to get it out, but managed, "I don't know how much we can trust Gaeta, but, according to him, if the resistance attempts to attack the Cylons, then they will round up prisoners and shoot them."

"How many?" Graham asked.

"I don't know, Graham, but I got the impression that it would be a lot. They may choose me, they may choose you or your wife...or they could choose some of the children." Laura replied.

“So they want to force the issue, eh? Who’s supposed to inform the resistance of this?”

“They want me to go, but I recommended you to go. I can handle the high school kids, along with Tory, as best I can. You can only go by yourself, though.”

Graham looked at his old friend hard for a moment, then asked, “You’re holding something back, aren’t you?”

Laura nodded and said, “I believe that was a military ship that landed, and I believe that they are survivors. I also believe that there’s a good chance that they could be from Earth. If that is the case, then they need to know what happened to us.

“There also might be the chance that they may be sending a rescue fleet to pick the survivors up. If they are from Earth, and they do send a fleet, then they need someone to help coordinate the possible liberation of the settlement. Since you were once in the military, you seemed to be the best choice for the job.”

Graham nodded and said, “It’s been a while, but I imagine I’ve not forgotten much about being a soldier. I’ll head out as soon as they want me too.”

Laura hugged him again, then revealed why Dr. Cottle was there. “There is another reason why I’m not going.” She bit her lip, but managed to say it. “The doctor suspects that my cancer may be back. If that is the case, then there’s almost no chance of recovery, given the circumstances. If...if the worst comes to pass, I want you to take my place and lead our people to Earth.”

Graham didn’t know what to think, so he said, “I will, Laura.”, and, after saying a somewhat painful goodbye, went back to his place, where he informed his wife.

Cassie sat at their modest table, stunned. “I was afraid something like this might happen, given how she was cured in the first place, but why now, for the sake of the Gods?”

“Gods only know, Cass. Anyhow, I need to get some rest. I don’t know when I’ll be heading out.”

“Be safe, Graham!” Cassie said as she embraced her husband. “I lost you once, and managed to find you again. Gods only know how I’d go on if I lose you again!”

He ran his hands through her red hair, gently kissed her lips, and said, “I’ll do my best, hun!” They made love that night, then fell asleep.

The day after next, he was summoned to Colonial One and told that if the resistance struck the Cylons, 500 people would be rounded up and summarily executed. They would be chosen at random, so it could be anyone who went before the execution squad. He was to communicate that message to the resistance, get them to surrender, and get those survivors of the crash to either surrender as well or to leave the planet.

Graham took his orders in stride, as best he could. The next day, he was led by a couple of the human Cylons to the edge of the forest, where they believed that Starbuck and the others had fled. Graham knew of where they might be, having secretly helped Starbuck prepare for her team to flee into the woods. He shouldered his backpack and entered the forest, in search of his friend, as well as those who may have survived the crash.

Writer's note: some of the Star Blazers storyline has been from the great series of webcomics produced for Voyager Entertainment by Tim Eldred. You can view the seven current episodes of the comic (of which, the second and third chapters of the comic comprise a good bit of this story up until Andromeda II crashes on New Caprica) at www.starblazers.com, and the eighth episode of this web comic epic will debut in August 2006.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Five

Disturbing Revelations

Phoenix Station
September 8, 2214

Admiral William "Husker" Adama had a hard time fully trusting IQ-9, even though he was the furthest thing from a Cylon that he'd ever seen. The robot was short, squat, and seemed to have a penchant for grabbing women's skirts, if scuttlebutt was to be believed. No Cylon he knew would do that sort of harassment.

Then again, they did have human versions of themselves, so who knows what they were capable of?

Three other ships had just arrived at the highly classified, top-secret facility. The space battleships Mizutani, the Gideon, and the Yamanami orbited the large chunk of ice floating in space along with the Colonial Battlestars Galactica and Pegasus, as well as the space attack carrier Algeria. Derek Wildstar and General Wendy Singleton-Glitchman had arrived a day earlier aboard the main space battleship Arizona, which was fitting given the name of the station.

Adama and his son Lee, who commanded Pegasus, sat in the conference room, waiting on Derek and Wendy to arrive. Sandor had alerted them about Adama's reaction to IQ-9, and the two visitors from Earth had requested a meeting to discuss the matter privately.

"What do you think they'll ask us, dad?" Lee asked, breaking the silence between them.

"I'm not sure, son, but I'd bet it'll have to do with the Cylons. They weren't happy with the way I reacted to that short, red robot of theirs."

"Can you blame us? I mean, the Cylons did rebel and almost completely wiped us out."

Adama countered, "Son, we created the Cylons. It's our sin that's come back to haunt us. Hopefully when we tell them the whole story of what happened, they'll understand."

"And if they don't?" Lee asked.

"Then we're screwed." Adama replied bluntly.

Meanwhile, in Sandor's office, Derek, Wendy, and Sandor discussed what was to come at the meeting. "He mentioned something about Cylons, but then he became tight-lipped. Like he didn't want to admit to something."

Derek scratched his chin and paused for a moment to think about what Sandor had told him. "Okay, let me get this straight: according to them, their twelve colony worlds were wiped out by these Cylons, who are similar to IQ-9, except taller and much more articulated. What was left of their fleet managed to escape to a world they call New Caprica, which may or may not be where Nova's ship either crashed or was shot down."

Wendy added, "Seems somewhat straightforward to me, but there's something more to it, I take it."

Sandor nodded and replied, "When I was aboard their ship, I overheard a conversation in their Command Information Center, which is what they call their bridge. I heard them refer to someone as 'Sharon the Cylon', which seemed to honk off the XO on the ship. I pretended to not notice what was said, but I began to wonder if they might have a Cylon prisoner on board that's a human clone."

Derek chuckled without humor and said, "You can't be serious? If that's the case, then there could be more of them among them and they don't even know it."

"I wish I was joking, Wildstar, but their whole mood ever since they got here has made me wonder. It's almost like their paranoid or something."

Wendy interjected, "Well, it's likely they are considering that their homeworlds were wiped out by this enemy. We all know how close we've come to having Earth wiped out in those five years of fire a decade ago. Even though we've been at peace for ten years now, I know of many people who feel like it's only a matter of time until we're attacked again."

Sandor's watch beeped, and he said, "It's time. Let's go." They began to file out of the office, but Sandor stopped short and asked the other two a question. "Should I reveal my own artificial parts to them, or should we save that for later?"

Derek and Wendy looked at each other, and Derek said, "Best to lay it out on the table, Sandor. It's not like you're a full-blown robot, even if you've fooled me a few times over the years, with the way you work." Sandor got the joke and laughed along with the other three as they made their way to the conference room. Years ago, Sandor had been injured in an amusement park ride accident that claimed the life of his dearly beloved older sister. His arms and legs had to be amputated, and they were replaced with mechanized prosthetics that more than matched the abilities of their flesh and bone counterparts.

What the Adamas would make of that was unknown, but they would have to deal with it if they wanted the Star Force's help in liberating their homeworld. However, there were questions that needed answers first.

New Caprica

(Under Cylon occupation)

About five kilometers into the woods near the crash site of Andromeda II

In the two days that Kara "Starbuck" Thrace had known Captain Nova Forrester, she had been struck by two things: Nova's stunning beauty and the face that, despite looking like a fragile doll, she was tough as iron. Currently, they lay beside one another, aiming Astro automatic rifles at Cylon Centurions on a scouting mission in the forest. They had been

informed by one of their own scouts of the encroaching force, so Nova proposed setting up an ambush.

Nova and Starbuck were staring straight at the oncoming Cylon Centurions. They would take the first shots and knock down as many of them as possible, then duck down when the Centurions swung fire their way. Beta and Delta teams would then open up on their flanks and try to take out the rest. Hiding out between the three teams were Colonel Saul Tigh and Galen Tyrol, who had grenade launchers and would mop up whatever was left of the force.

“Get ready. They’re almost within optimum range.” Nova said quietly into her headset to the others in the ambush force. She clicked off and whispered to Nova, “When I say, ‘now’, let them have it. We want them to get closer.”

Starbuck laughed and said, “So we can see the red beams of their eyes?”

Nova looked at her funny, then shook her head and said, “No, somehow I doubt you’d ever heard of the American Revolution three centuries ago.”

Now it was Starbuck’s turn to give Nova a funny look, but then she shrugged and returned to aiming her rifle. Both of them were filthy and dirty, but neither of them cared. Starbuck thought that Nova might have been the type to complain about her uniform getting dirty and wet in the rains, but Nova wasn’t fazed by the hardship.

Nova whispered to herself, “Closer...closer...just a little closer!” She clicked off the safety on her rifle, took one long breath to steady herself, then whispered to Kara, “Now!”

The energy bolts from the rifles slammed into the heads of two Centurions, then two more as Nova and Starbuck quickly got new targets. By the time they Centurions had a fix on their position and opened fire, six of the ten were down.

Nova and Starbuck ducked down in their reinforced blind as their position came under fire. Before Nova could get off the signal to the other teams, Beta and Gamma opened fire and took out the rest of the force. Tigh and Tyrol’s grenade launchers weren’t needed for this operation, which was a blessing.

They all assembled around the fallen Centurions, finishing off any that managed to somehow survive. When that was done, Tigh walked up to Nova, looked over the remnants of the fallen Cylons, and grunted, “Nice work.”

“Thanks.” Nova said, warily. Her guard was up, because she didn’t think these were the only Centurions in the area. “We should get back to base camp. We can send out more patrols to scout out the area and see if anymore of these Centurions come calling.”

“Agreed.” Tigh said, then looked up at the clouding sky. “Looks like rain again! We’d better get back quick before we get soaked.” They headed back to base camp in a roundabout way, making sure to watch their backs just in case they might be followed.

They were almost half a kilometer away from base camp when they heard a rustling of leaves and the crunching of branches and twigs on the ground. “Shhhhhh! Take cover!” Starbuck whispered, and they all managed to duck behind trees and other cover to hide themselves from the unknown intruder.

When the footsteps got closer, Starbuck whirled out and pointed her rifle at Graham Walter, who quickly put his hands over his head. "Frak! Graham, what the hell are you doing here?" Starbuck said exasperatedly at her friend.

"Sorry, but they sent me to deliver a message. If you strike at the Cylons in the settlement, they'll round up 500 people randomly and execute them by firing squad." Walter said.

Nova stepped out and said, "Then we'd better make damn sure that when we strike, they don't have the chance to do that."

"Who are you? Are you from that crashed ship?" Walter said.

"Yes. Captain Nova Forrester of the Earth Defense Force space battleship Andromeda II, at your service. Or, what was the Andromeda II."

"Earth? Frak me! You're from Earth?" Walter said with a startled laugh. "Well, I guess the old man was right after all!"

Nova looked puzzled until Starbuck informed her of who he was referring to, "Admiral Adama. That's my former CO back when I was in the military."

Nova nodded, then turned to Walter and asked, "What do they want from us?"

"They want you to surrender, of course. They're not happy that you blew up your own ship, by the way." Walter said.

"Well, they'll just have to live without Earth technology. As for the surrender, that's not happening." Nova replied.

"Hell no it's not! Not while we have a chance at beating them back!" Tigh said, then added, "Wonder if your XO has had any luck getting a message through?"

Nova sighed and said, "I hope so. Homer said that he thinks he can get an encoded signal out past the Cylons, but he doesn't know how far it'll go. It may be strong enough to reach one of our frontier outposts or an automated probe, with luck. We'll see when we get back to camp." A crash of thunder signaled the beginning of a downpour, which led Nova to add, "C'mon, let's get going!"

Phoenix Station
Same day
Conference Room

"So you were the ones who created these Cylons, right?" asked Wendy.

"Correct. We created them over a half-century ago to perform tasks that no other human desired to do, which included wars. Looking back, it was rather stupid to allow highly developed machines with advanced intelligence to fight your wars for you." Adama said ruefully.

"We encountered a similar race about a dozen years ago. They were called the Dark Nebulans. They eventually allowed the robotics to overwhelm them to the point where only their heads were flesh and bone, with the rest of them." Derek interjected.

Adama nodded to Derek, then continued, "Forty years ago, they rebelled against us. They almost overwhelmed us, but we managed to fight them to a draw and force a truce. The war lasted twelve years until an armistice was declared, in which the Cylons departed to form their own homeworld."

Sandor raised his hand to ask a question. "One thing I don't understand, at least from an engineering point of view: why weren't security protocols put into their programming to prevent something like this from happening? Centuries ago, a science fiction author wrote a story about robots in which he proposed what he called the 'three laws of robotics'.

"His name was Isaac Asimov. His work was required reading at the Academy. The three laws were proposed in a short story called 'Runaround'. The first law states that a robot may not harm a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. The second law states that a robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. The third law states that a robot must protect its own existence, as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law."

Adama responded, "Makes me wish we had more of that science fiction back on our world. Perhaps we could have prevented all of this if someone had written something similar."

Lee scoffed, saying, "With all due respect, sir, I doubt that the Quorum of Twelve nor the President would have listened at the time. What I've read of them at the time, they weren't exactly the most enlightened people, to say the least."

"I remember that, son, because I lived through it. We were an arrogant bunch back then." Adama leaned back in his chair and sighed.

"So now we know some of the history between you and the Cylons, the question is why they attacked the Colonies again?" Wendy asked.

Lee answered, "From what we've learned, they have a monotheistic religion that they apparently created on their own. Whereas we follow a pantheon of twelve gods and goddesses, they follow just one, and, supposedly, He decided that we had sinned greatly against his 'chosen people', namely the Cylons, and that a penance for all we did with the Cylons had to be exacted."

"Some penance!" Adama added. "Twelve billion people wiped out in thermonuclear bombings. How the hell do you justify it?"

"I mean, yes, we treated them like crap, looking back now. We played God, and our creation made us pay for that stupidity."

Sandor shook his head, sighed, and said, "You know, it'd be easy to pass judgment on you, but we've committed our own sins as well. We had slavery, genocide, war...I could go on and on. But to create these Cylons to do your dirty work..."

Adama could only nod and say, "I know. I was just a young Viper pilot when the Cylons rebelled. I remember being a kid when they first came out. My mom wanted one to help with the chores around the house, but my dad would have none of it. He was an attorney, specializing in civil liberties, and he used to always say that it was wrong to create these beings just to become slaves to their creators. I always thought he was full of it about the Cylons until they attacked. If we'd only listened to him and others like him..."

Later that evening, aboard Galactica, father and son shared a meal after working out their part in what Wendy had dubbed Operation Redemption. "You know, for a moment there, I thought they were going to start looking down on us for creating the Cylons. Sandor seemed to be particularly troubled by it."

Lee chewed his noodles thoughtfully for a moment, then said, "Well, he did tell us about his arms and legs being artificial, but that's not the same as being a Cylon. As for IQ-9, I can guess that he and others like him are programmed with those laws that Sandor mentioned."

Adama looked at his son, asking, "He? It's just a robot, son."

"Maybe to you and me, dad, but to them, it's a living being, and maybe that was the problem all along between us and the Cylons." Adama went silent for a long time after that, and the two finished their dinner, only resuming some small talk about various crewmembers.

When Lee left to return to Pegasus, Adama prepared for bed. As he lay down to go to sleep, his mind went back to the speech he gave at the decommissioning ceremony that seemed so long ago...

"The Cylon War is long over, yet we must not forget the reasons why so many sacrificed so much in the cause of freedom. The cost of wearing the uniform can be high, but --
"Sometimes it's too high.

"You know, when we fought the Cylons, we did it to save ourselves from extinction. But we never answered the question, why? Why are we as a people worth saving? We still commit murder because of greed, spite, jealousy. And we still visit all of our sins upon our children. We refuse to accept the responsibility for anything that we've done.

"Like we did with the Cylons. We decided to play God, create life. When that life turned against us, we comforted ourselves in the knowledge that it really wasn't our fault, not really. You cannot play God then wash your hands of the things that you've created. Sooner or later, the day comes when you can't hide from the things that you've done anymore."

Adama tossed and turned, trying to get his mind to calm down and allow him to sleep, but the memories of the first war came to him, as well as its aftermath. By the time his alarm went off hours later, he had only managed a couple of hours sleep. He shrugged it off, figuring that some coffee would help perk him up. Thankfully, the Phoenix Station supply depot had some to spare, as Galactica's own supplies were scarce. It had been a blessing to run into the humans, but he wondered what they would make of what was left of the Colonials back on New Caprica.

New Caprica

(under Cylon occupation)

Resistance base camp

Starbuck came over to Nova's tent to talk about strategies concerning a possible offensive against the Cylons in the settlement, but was brought up short at the site of Nova staring at a picture frame. She hadn't noticed Starbuck's entrance, so she was standing there, staring at the two pictures in the slender frame quietly.

Starbuck coughed and Nova jumped, clearly surprised. "Uh...what is it, Starbuck?"

"You asked me to come by and discuss the offensive." Starbuck pointed to the photos, which were still in Nova's hands, and asked, "May I ask who those two people are?"

Nova handed the picture frame to Starbuck, pointing out the dark haired man in the left side. "That's my husband, Derek. The little girl is my daughter, Miyuki."

"You're married? So am I!" Starbuck remarked, still looking at the pictures.

"Where's your husband?" Nova asked.

"He's back at the settlement." Starbuck answered, hearing her voice become sad. "He's sick with pneumonia. Over a year or so ago, I went back to my homeworld of Caprica to retrieve a relic to help us get to Earth." Starbuck told the story of the Arrow of Apollo and how

it was used to open the Tomb of Athena. Nova listened intently to the story, wondering about how these humans had come to what had been their system eons ago. Starbuck had previously told her that the Colonials had known about Earth and called it the "thirteenth colony".

By the time that Starbuck had finished her conversation, they were sitting on Nova's cot inside her tent. When Starbuck finished, Nova was staring out into space, thinking more about the story of Kobol that Starbuck had told her. Could aliens have been behind this? Could they be the Gods that Kara is referring to? And could they still be around? Nova thought as Starbuck looked down at the frame in her hands.

"So how old's your daughter?" Starbuck asked.

Nova shook her head and put her woolgathering about Kobol into the back of her mind. "Oh? Miyuki's nine years old. We had her a year after we got married. At that time, both Derek and I had taken jobs at main headquarters, so we didn't go off on missions anymore. But five years ago, we had some new ships come online and they needed some commanders, so I re-upped with the Avatar. I had just taken command of Andromeda II when we were shot down here."

Starbuck nodded, "I was an only child too, and my mom was in the military."

"Really, what branch was she in?"

Starbuck sighed, "Colonial Marines. She was a sergeant."

Nova noticed that sigh and said, "I take it you didn't have a happy childhood."

Starbuck shook her head and got up off the cot. She almost left, but stopped short at the door and turned back to face Nova. "It's...it's difficult for me to talk about."

Nova hesitated at first, but was able to ask, "Were you...abused?"

Starbuck could feel tears stinging her eyes as the memories long forced down in her mind came surging toward the front of her mind. She had kept them well hid for years, not even telling her fiance Zak Adama nor his father and her former commanding officer, Admiral William Adama. But, for some reason, in that moment, she felt the need to tell Nova, to let it all out.

So she did...all of it. She told Nova about how her fingers had been fractured right along the knuckle when her mom had slammed the cover down onto her hands because Starbuck was playing loudly to drown out the argument raging between her mother and her father. She did everything to stay away from home whenever her mother was around, so she was active in extracurricular activities and athletics. She was an excellent fieldball and roundball player, but the indoor game of pyramid was where she shined the most, which eventually led to her receiving a scholarship to the Fleet Academy to play the sport.

She never told the reason why she was so active in sports: to hide the bruises that her mother had given her. Whenever anyone asked, she would shrug and say that she had been playing a pickup game or had practiced in her free time. But whenever she had to go home, and whenever her mother was around, she had to walk carefully around her, because her mom could be set off by the least little thing.

"Why didn't you go to the authorities about this?" Nova asked, choking back a sob.

Starbuck shrugged as she replied, "I did, but they didn't believe me. Besides, she was even worse after I went to them, so what was the point?" It was then that the dam that had held back the emotions burst, and tears flooded out of Starbuck's eyes. Nova let Starbuck bury her face into her shoulder, and both women cried their eyes out that night.

The next day, Nova went over to Homer's tent, where the communication equipment they had taken from Andromeda II was stored. Officially, communications was Irma Levitz's responsibility, but Homer knew the systems like the back of his hand, so he helped the Israeli woman out with trying to get a signal to an EDF outpost. "Any luck?" Nova asked.

Homer shook his head, saying, "Nope, not yet. We've come close, but I'm not sure if it's signals from the past or present. I'm picking up Derek's voice, but only in snatches, and I can't be sure if it's him now or him in the past."

"Have you heard your own voice as well?" Nova asked.

"Yes, and that's made me wary of this voice. It's not out of the realm of possibility that these Cylons could have recorded these signals from the past, chopped them up, and then use them to try and lure us out." Homer answered.

Irma added, "That's a bit paranoid on your part, Homer. Don't you think?"

"Maybe, Irma, but if you'd been through all of what we in the Star Force went through in the five years of fire." Homer was just about to add more, but a commotion outside drew the attention of all three of them.

Nova walked towards where some of the New Caprican resistance fighters were gathered. Starbuck came walking up from another direction and nodded to Nova briefly. "What is it?" Starbuck asked.

One of the fighters said, "We just saw some Centurions headed this way. About two dozen of them, coming in from the north!"

Before Starbuck could issue the orders to set up another ambush, Irma came running out of her tent.

"Homer! Nova! We've got a signal! It's from Derek Wildstar!"

Phoenix Station

September 10, 2214

Derek Wildstar was back where he belonged, and that was the bridge of Yamato. To him, this felt more like home than any other place he had ever lived, even the place where Nova, Miyuki, and he lived. Now, thanks to the work of Sandor, Yamato was back and better than ever.

The crew had never been through the rigors of combat before, but they had served on this ship as it was being rebuilt, so they knew the systems inside and out. Now, though, their proverbial combat cherries were about to be popped, because thanks to the signal that Homer and Irma had sent, they now knew the location of where Andromeda II had gone down.

"Galactica, Pegasus, and the EDF task force are clear, sir!" said communications officer Meghan Wallace. "We're ready to proceed with the launch procedure."

Wildstar nodded and turned to Sandor, who was at his familiar position. "Sandor, we're ready when you are!"

Sandor nodded and gave the command to open the space dock doors. Unlike what they had done with the asteroid Icarus, they weren't going to destroy Phoenix Station, because too much had been invested in the place to simply destroy it.

Once the huge space doors were opened and the engines were running, Derek turned to the ship's new pilot, a Australian female named Alice Manning, and gave the order to move out. Alice confirmed the order and began to work the controls, which had been improved since Derek's old friend Mark Venture had last used them.

A wave of grief flowed through him about the loss of his best friend. He had been wounded during the attack on the cityship Uruk that the Deingil used as their main base. Instead of seeking treatment, he had bravely stayed at his post and used all his strength to pilot the ship free of the destructing cityship. But he had lost so much blood that, by the time Derek and Nova realized that he was wounded, it was too late.

A communication from Galactica shook him from his reverie, as Adama informed Derek that they were ready for their faster-than-light jump. Derek nodded and ordered Galactica and Pegasus to proceed to New Caprica. As soon as they jumped, the other ships in the EDF task force began their preparations to warp to where Andromeda II had been shot down.

It was fitting that Chris Eager, Dash Jordan, and Cory Conroy were here for this task force. Derek knew that so many of the Star Force had already been lost, and two of those who had been there from the start were facing danger, so the call to assist had been answered quickly. Wendy vouched for them back home, even though the Defense Committee was raising a stink over what was referred to as a 'rescue mission'.

Derek had the feeling that something was brewing back home, but he didn't have time to dwell on that now. At this moment, Yamato's long-dormant warp engines were powering up. When all was ready, Derek gave the command and they were off.

Kobol

Inside the Tomb of Athena

The being inside the tomb had wanted to contact the five people who had entered her realm some time ago, but had resisted. Instead, she showed them what they were asking for, knowing that they had to find Earth in order to be ready for what was to come.

She had been a friend of the Lords of Kobol, and they had hidden her here when the enemies of her people came to find her. Athena had sacrificed herself to protect her friend, and the being had helped to bury her after the thirteen tribes left Kobol. To this day, the being mourned her loss, but knew the day would come that she would help make her friend's sacrifice mean something.

She knew that she was not supposed to leave until all thirteen tribes were once again together and had come to see her in the tomb. When she picked up the signal of the Earth forces encountering Galactica and the rest of the fleet, she knew the time was fast approaching when she would reveal to them what she knew of the departure of the Gods from this place, and why they left.

She knew of the Cylons, but they were not the real threat. What was the true threat to all thirteen tribes was what also caused their gods to leave this place. She could feel their dark presence in her soul increasing, and she knew that they were coming again.

She could only hope that she could be freed from the tomb soon, because what was left of the thirteen tribes would need her help if they were to defeat this dark force. All she could do now, though, was wait and see what the members of the thirteenth tribe could do to free those who were enslaved on New Caprica.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Six

Eviction Process

One jump from New Caprica

Earth Date September 11, 2214

It was an ironic date, as far as Derek Wildstar was concerned. Two hundred and thirteen years ago, a terrorist attack was launched upon the American cities of New York and Washington, resulting in the deaths of over three thousand people. Derek had learned about it in World History II class in high school, and had found the event bizarre given the toll that the Gamilon offensive against Earth was taking upon the human race. For a moment, Derek wondered what Osama bin Laden would have made of Deslok, leader of the Gamilons.

It had been a decade since Derek had seen any Gamilon ships. The last time was when the water world Aquarius was approaching Earth, thanks to the Dinguil, who had lost their planet and had decided to take over the Earth by flooding it.

If Osama, or his American adversary, President George W. Bush, had known about the five years of fire that the Star Force had went through, they'd have forgotten about the whole war on terror and readied themselves for the terror of Gamilon planet bombs raining down upon Earth. To Derek, that was real terror.

In a way, the same thing had happened to the Colonials, with one exception: the Cylons were of Colonial making. It was as Adama had said last night: their own sin of playing God had

come back to bite them in the ass. That was why the Colonials had been wary of IQ-9, and especially of IQ-9000, the latest model of robots.

Derek had a problem seeing the 9000 series as a person; unlike the way he viewed IQ-9. The 9000's were without personality and obeyed orders without question, and never misbehaved. The same could not be said of IQ-9, who had a penchant for wanting to lift up the ladies' skirts until Dr. Sane had (finally) managed to stop him from doing that. Which, considering the way the Galactica and Pegasus crews viewed the robot, was a very good thing, as Derek had no doubt that Lee Adama would have taken the biggest wrench he could find and whacked IQ-9 over the head if the robot would have done something like that to Dee, Lee's wife.

That inevitably brought him back to thoughts about his own wife. They had finally managed to make contact with her and find out what had happened. Sure enough, they had landed on New Caprica, and had met up with the Colonial resistance planning to attack the Cylons. Adama had been close to tears after seeing the message come in from the person he called Starbuck, while Derek had been close to his own. He'd come far too close to losing Nova over the years to ever take something like this for granted.

Adama made one last trip over to the newly reborn Yamato before the final jump to engage the enemy. When he entered the bridge, the first thing Derek noticed was that the mustache was gone. Derek asked about it, and Adama replied, "I said I'd shave it off if a miracle came along, and, since it did..." He shrugged and left it at that.

They went back to the planning room to discuss the final plans for the attack. Galactica and Pegasus would jump in and lure the Cylon basestars one way, using drones to simulate battlestars that would be launched by all the Raptors they had. Then, as the basestars moved to intercept the phony battlestars, the real ones would jump in and engage them.

The original plan that Adama had come up with was a bold and daring one: have Galactica jump into the New Caprican atmosphere to launch her Vipers and jump out before she hit the ground. Neither Galactica or Pegasus were atmosphere-capable, but Yamato was, and Adama and Wildstar had adjusted the plans to have the old ship land on New Caprica and aid in the rescue.

The EDS Algeria, which was also capable of atmospheric flight, would join Yamato on the invasion, while the other EDS ships (Mizutani, Gideon, and Yamanami) would warp in opposite the Colonial battlestars and attack the Cylon basestars from behind. Once that happened, the battlestars would jump to low New Caprican orbit and assist the fleet in jumping to the rendezvous coordinates.

All was ready, and they were just hours away from jumping. Derek hoped that Nova would be okay, as he knew that she was planning an attack on the settlement to distract the Centurions and to try and free the prisoners in the detention facility. Word had reached them that the Cylons had arrested Laura Roslin, the former president of the Colonies, along with Cally Tyrol and Sam Anders. This clearly worried Adama, but he didn't hesitate to move ahead with the plans.

New Caprica (under Cylon occupation)
Resistance base camp

Nova Forrester and Kara "Starbuck" Thrace were ready to move out. They had been tipped off as to what had happened to Laura Roslin and the others, including Kara's husband, Sam. Galen Tyrol was vacillating between worry and rage at the thought of his wife under arrest, but he was holding up well enough. Graham Walter had snuck into the forest and given them the

information about the arrests, as well as what he and his wife were up to coordinating the resistance within the city.

Graham and his wife Cassie had joined with Laura Roslin's former assistant, Tory Foster, to organize a resistance within the settlement. They hadn't struck yet, because they were waiting for the right moment when Kara's forces would come out and attack. Now that he knew that Galactica and Pegasus were going to be joined by forces from Earth, he definitely had a reason to wait. Kara worried that they may have friendly fire when all hell broke loose, but there was nothing that could be done about that. It was a risk that they had no other choice but to take.

Nova and Kara had been joined by other fighters who had snuck out with the guidance of Graham in the darkness of night, some of them were students of the high school that Graham taught all the subjects because there was no one else to do it. While doing his best to teach them grammar, literature, history, science, and other required subjects; he also taught them about resisting the Cylons. At least those whose parents approved of what they were doing, because some did not want to have anything to do with a resistance. But for those who did, the young kids were joined by one or both parents, who wanted to take up the fight themselves, and they were more than ready to do what was necessary to win their freedom.

Homer moved out with them as they began to move out towards the edge of the forest nearest to the settlement, shouldering a communications backpack along with a rifle. He kept in touch not only with the ships that were about to approach New Caprica, but also with Graham and Cassie deep inside the settlement. It was a miracle from the Gods that they had not been captured along with Roslin and the rest, and, for that, Kara thanked the gods Apollo and Aphrodite for such a blessing.

"We're picking up a signal, Starbuck!" Homer whispered to her from his foxhole.

"Who's it from?" Starbuck whispered back from an adjacent hole.

"Galactica. They're ready to jump. Adama says to send the signal to Walter to begin the distractions!" Homer replied.

Nova ordered him to contact Graham and Cassie, and then she broke out a map that Colonel Tigh had given her of the settlement. Tigh led another group of forces along with the combat chief from the Andromeda II, Namio Sakamaki. They would head for the spaceport and free the ships, using the launch keys that Graham Walter had somehow managed to secure. Nova and Starbuck would head towards the detention facility, with Galen Tyrol handling the heavy weapons that, hopefully, would take out most, if not all, of the Centurions nearby.

Meanwhile, inside the settlement, Duck and Jammer snuck into the Walter's humble tent for a meeting. "How go things in the NCP, guys?" Graham asked slyly.

Both Duck and Jammer were wary of being double agents, but they knew that they would be spared when the time came for reprisals against those who had joined the New Caprican Police willingly. Roslin had approved of Graham's plan to plant people within the NCP, and, over the few weeks of operation, had managed to gain numerous nuggets of necessary intelligence as to what the Cylons were up to.

"Are you sure they'll forgive us for conducting that raid?" Duck asked. He had been very reluctant to join the NCP, and his wife had protested the move. Nora had no objections now, as she had learned that she was one of those to be arrested from a source that had leaked the information about those who were to be arrested. With Graham's help, Nora had been able to escape into the forest and meet up with the resistance, which pleased Duck to no end.

"If I have anything to do with it, they will. Roslin knows of your roles within the resistance, and she certainly won't give you up to the Cylons or anyone else. So any news about what the Cylons are up to?" Graham asked.

"Nothing much." Jammer said. "We have no news as to what they plan on doing with those detained. Hopefully no news is good news for them." He was clearly nervous being here.

"Relax, guys!" Graham tried to reassure them. "The Cylons know that we know each other. Why do you think I had the heads of the NCP assign you to come by and help me teach my students? What they assume is a class designed to convince them that the Cylons and

humans can live in peace is something totally different, but that's known only to those select few."

"Who else are the double agents? Wouldn't it be practical for us to know about the others?" Duck asked.

"No, because if one or two of you were captured, you wouldn't be able to give up the others. If they came for Cassie and me, we'd go down with a fight to make sure they didn't find out who was involved in all of this. Remember guys, I used to be in special ops in my military days, so I sort of know what I'm doing." Graham replied.

Duck and Jammer nodded, and they concluded their conversation soon enough. After leaving the Walter's tent, they made their way back to their own residences. "You think he'll be able to pull this off?" Jammer asked as he pulled his toboggan further down onto his head to beat back the chill.

"I'm not sure, but what choice do we have? At least Nora's safe, or as safe as can be." Duck replied.

"So it's true that the ship that crashed is from Earth?" Jammer asked.

"That's what Graham said. Why would he lie?" Duck replied.

Jammer shook his head and said, "Doesn't seem real, does it? Earth's supposed to be a myth. I mean, I remember being there when the old man said that he knew where Earth was. I didn't believe it at the time, thinking he was just saying it to boost morale, ya know? Turns out the old man was right after all!"

Inside her cell, Laura Roslin contemplated her fate. She knew that the ship was from Earth, and that, more than likely, the forces from Earth that had sent that ship would come after it. Whether or not she would still be alive when they arrived was up in the air, but she didn't worry about that. If freeing her people meant she would die in the quest for liberty from the Cylons, so be it.

When the knock came, she expected to be led out to an execution. She didn't worry about it, because she made her peace with the gods about this long ago. She left it in their hands, and she trusted them enough to see the remaining Colonials safely to Earth. The door opened, and one of the D'anna Biers models coldly said, "Get up and follow me!" Roslin did as she was told, wondering if this was the reporter that she gave access to over a year ago shortly after the fleet had been reunited after the events on Kobol.

Instead of a firing squad, she was led into a room with a table and several chairs. Sitting in one of them was her old foe, Tom Zarek. She used to fear him, thinking that he would kill her and overthrow the government she led. Now, she wished he were free so he could do the same sort of thing with that scumbag Gaius Baltar.

"Laura! Why did they get you up this early in the morning?" Zarek asked with a wry smile.

"I don't know Tom. Hell, I don't even know what time it is! So why did they drag you in here?" she replied.

"Gods only know, but I'm sure we'll find out soon enough!" Zarek said, looking at the D'anna model as she stood by the door.

"The meeting will begin soon enough." With that, the D'anna model left the two inside the room.

Laura looked at Zarek and said, "I think they're going to offer us a deal!" She said this with a raised eyebrow.

Zarek understood what she was getting at. They both suspected the room was bugged, so they couldn't talk openly. "Could be. Question is: is it something we can accept?"

Laura replied, "Depends what the deal is." She smiled at him as the door opened and five Cylons came into the room. An Aaron Doral, Sharon Valerii, D'anna Biers (Laura figured it was the same one, as this one wore the same clothes as the other one had), Brother Cavil, and the blond female model she knew as Shelly Godfrey sat down at the other end of the table.

Cavil spoke first. "Here's the deal: we know that ship that we shot down is from Earth, and we know that they've been able to get in contact with their home forces. We know that they are probably going to be sending a rescue team here to evacuate them, and probably all of you."

Roslin looked at them and smiled, saying, "That may be so. So what do you want to do about it?"

Doral replied, "Understand this: we will hold this world at any costs. If it means sacrificing all of you to do it, don't think we would hesitate to do that. We don't want to do that, though."

The Sharon added, "We came to this world in peace, so long as you didn't resist. If you agree to the deal, we'll let the Earthers leave, so long as they leave us alone as well as the settlement."

"They can even take the resistance fighters that are with them now." The Shelly Godfrey model said, which drew her an evil look from the D'anna model.

"You know so little about us. You know that?" Laura Roslin said.

"Laura..." Zarek interjected, but Laura held up her hand to silence them.

Laura continued, "Do you seriously expect Admiral Adama to agree to this deal, even if I were to agree to it? Do you seriously expect the Earthers to simply go along with this?"

The Cavil said, "They'll agree if you tell them to do that. Especially if you tell them that if they don't agree, we'll nuke this colony."

For a brief second, the thought of a nuke going off in the city ran ice down her spine, but then she realized that the Colonists would not suffer if they did that. For all she knew, they could be bluffing. If they weren't, and they used the nuke, then she wouldn't have to worry about the miscalculation.

"Go ahead and use it, then! You take the Earthers out along with us, they'll come after you and destroy you!" Laura said, and she saw that Tom Zarek was looking at her as if she were mad.

For the very first time, she saw that the Cylons were unsure of themselves. She even suspected that they might just be scared. They knew what the Colonials were capable of, but they had no idea what those from Earth could do to them. They abruptly called the meeting to a close, leaving the NCP guards to take them back to their cells.

As it happened to be, Jammer was escorting Laura Roslin back to her cell. He looked around to see if anyone was around, then he spoke to her. "Do you know who I am?" he asked her.

"Yes. I know that you're one of the chosen ones." Laura Roslin used the phrase that Graham had come up with for the double agents.

Jammer nodded and then said, "He wanted me to tell you that they're coming soon. Perhaps before the end of the day, perhaps tomorrow. It could be just hours away."

Laura nodded, and Jammer put her into her cell as another guard turned the corner to walk down the hallway. The door closed and Laura sat back down on the hard, cold floor. She leaned back against the wall and began to cry. These were not tears of sadness, though, but tears of joy, because salvation was close at hand.

Aboard Colonial One, tensions ran high. The Cylons suspected something was coming, but they had no idea what. Every time they sent raiders over to try and shoot up the fallen ship, they would be shot out of the sky before they even got within weapons range. The three heavy raiders they sent over were knocked down out of the sky with missiles from the stricken ship. To the Cylons, every second that ship was functioning was a second that gave the Colonials hope for escaping the Cylons grasp.

For Gaius Baltar, he didn't care. He had failed as president of the Colonies, and failed massively. The survivors had come here believing that they would be safe from the Cylons, only for the Cylons to find them a year later, thanks to the nuke that Gina had used to destroy Cloud Nine as well as several other ships in the surviving fleet.

He had given Gina that nuke in anger over Laura Roslin's letter to him when she was close to death from cancer. Gaius Baltar had managed to find the cure (or so he thought), only to find that the very person he saved thought so little of him. He had given the nuke to Royan Jahee, the leader of a "peace with the Cylons" movement, knowing that he was in collusion with Gina (Jahee didn't know that Gina was a Cylon) and would give it to her.

Now his sins were coming due. The Cylons knew that the crashed ship's crew had been able to get signals out, and, more distressing, they had managed to receive signals from

whatever forces were coming for them. They knew that the Galactica and Pegasus were coming, but they had no idea what those from the thirteenth colony would bring to the fight.

For most of the day, the Cylons ignored the president of the Colonies, leaving him to feel sorry for himself in his chair. Baltar was daydreaming of death when several pieces of paper, stapled together, were plopped down in front of him. Before him stood one of the Number Three models (D'anna Biers), and she coldly told him to, "Sign this!"

"What is it?" he asked as he began to read it.

"Don't read it, just sign!" she said with some relish.

Then he realized what it was: a death warrant. He looked through the names rapidly, looking for the two he surely knew were there. On page five, he found Laura Roslin's name. On the last page, he found Tom Zarek's name. His former campaign manager and vice president had refused to work with the Cylons, and he had been thrown in jail shortly after said refusal.

"I won't do it!" Baltar said, knowing what would probably happen next.

"Then we'll just have to get a new president then!" A Number Five (Aaron Doral) told him, clicking off the safety of a pistol and sticking it beside his head.

Gaius said nothing, willing the Cylon to kill him. Caprica Six protested, but Number Five didn't listen. The Six in his head appeared, telling him that he needed to sign the document, because he had to do this no matter how much he dreaded it in order to fight another day.

Felix Gaeta looked on with little emotion. He was drained by all of this, and had long since given up on caring whether he lived or died. He had believed in Gaius Baltar, and Baltar had betrayed that belief. He knew that he was probably going to get the choice next: become president and sign the death warrant, or die.

That didn't happen, as a flash caught Gaeta's eye. Then another one arose from the settlement, then another, and yet another. "Oh Gods!" he said in shock at what he was seeing.

Number Five holstered his pistol and rushed over to the window to see what was going on, along with the other Cylons. Number Three looked out at the explosions and said, "Damn!" The time had arrived, and the news that clinched it came seconds later when Boomer entered the presidential office and said, "Two battlestars jumped in! Adama's back, and he's got company!"

Beyond the Rim of the Milky Way Galaxy

They looked upon the unfolding galaxy before them like a bride coming toward them on a wedding day. For these beings from the Andromedan galaxy, they had longed for this day, having been thwarted eons ago by a race that they no longer detected living in their galaxy.

The beings had scarlet red skin, almost the color of blood. They were humanoid in appearance, and they were similar to humans in appearance. Their hair was of three different shades depending on the person: gold, silver, or bronze.

These were not Olympian gods, though. These were the Maddarens, and they wanted to take over the Milky Way Galaxy. The Gamilons had denied them this prize, and that defeat had set them back for years. That and the internal civil war that had resulted from the defeat had resulted in their plans for conquest being delayed, but their supreme ruler had decided to finally launch the offensive.

They would go after the outer worlds first, then slowly would work towards the crowning jewel of the Milky Way Galaxy: Earth. They vowed to do what the Gamilons, the Comet Empire, the Dark Nebulans, and the Dinguil had failed to do: conquer that planet.

Kobol

Inside the Tomb of Athena

The being sensed that the ancient enemy was close at hand. She also sensed that the Cylons were near defeat on the world known as New Caprica. The time was nearing for those from Earth would once again be called to defend their galaxy, but they had been drained from so many battles in the past.

But now, a new race of humanity was about to join them in the fight. They had no idea what they would face, but they had managed to survive what would have doomed other races. They had been tested by the most intense flames of fire, and had managed to pass that test.

And for the Cylons, they would soon be tested themselves. Soon they would learn that there were bigger threats to their survival than the human race. They would have a choice: either join with their mortal enemies and fight off the ancient race soon to enter the galaxy, or continue to battle the humans and see all that they had gained was going to be for naught.

A signal had to be sent, and she was close to being ready to send it. She knew just the one who would need to receive it. The one who would lead them to Earth, but not survive. Or so it was said, because she had known Pythia. What the prophetess had not said was that the day would come when the dying leader would be healed, and the circle of time would be broken, and a new circle formed.

But the time to contact Laura Roslin was not now. She was busy enough with the ongoing battle. Even now, forces advanced towards her to free her and the rest. Whether they would succeed remained to be seen, but the being on Kobol was sure that they would succeed. For if they failed, the price would be too high for anyone to survive, and that included the Cylons.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Seven

The Old Great Ship Is The Same As She Used To Be

September 12, 2214

In orbit of New Caprica

On the bridge of EDS Yamato

Derek Wildstar knew he would have to take some time soon to thank Stephen Sandor for doing such a magnificent job of bringing the Yamato back to life and into fighting shape so soon. Cylon raiders from the surface tried to strafe the ship, as well as its companion, the Algeria, but pulse lasers and shock cannons put paid to them with no harm coming to the main ships.

Meanwhile, the Mizutani, Gideon, and Yamanami were devastating the Cylon basestars with their shock cannons. Despite being outnumbered four to one, the EDF ships were more than a match for the Cylons. This allowed the Galactica and Pegasus to jump into low orbit to assist in the rescue.

Combat Chief Peter Svenson watched the monitors as the Yamato descended down onto New Caprica, waiting for the moment when they could level out and launch the Black Tiger fighters. They would take out Centurion installations as well as escort the detachment of EDF Marines that Wildstar and Singleton had managed to warp in before the attack launched.

"We're clear, sir! Ready to launch fighters on your command!" Svenson called out as Chief Pilot Brandon Lange leveled the mighty ship out and deployed the wings for atmospheric maneuvering.

Derek smiled slightly and thought to himself, here we come, Nova! then gave the order to launch fighters. Out from beneath the belly of the ship, the squadrons of fighters and transport ships raced out and began to deploy. The Algeria followed suit and, soon, the skies were full of Black Tiger fighters, racing off to engage the Cylon raiders who had launched in an attempt to head them off.

On board Colonial One

Inside the President's Office

Gaius Baltar knew the end was near. The Cylons were in a panic, not expecting to meet this kind of resistance. Two forces had come out of the forest near the city and went through a couple of platoons of Centurions like a hot knife through butter. This sent shock waves through the command structure of the Cylons, as they hadn't expected the humans from the Earth ship to have such heavy weapons on them.

But Baltar was not surprised, as it seemed that everything about the occupation had gone wrong for the Cylons. They hadn't expected the amount of resistance they met, and they hadn't acted quickly enough to suppress it. Now that resistance was moving on the detention center as well as the spaceport. The Cylons had thought this a gesture in vain until one of the Number Five's came running in to announce that the launch keys were gone. They had found one of the Number Three's on the ground with bullet wounds in her knees.

"It's that bastard Graham Walter! He somehow managed to convince this Three to let him into the facility and to give him access to the keys!" Five said in a rage.

One of the other Three's said, "This is a distressing development! We should find out from this Three what she knows."

"We'll have to wait until she downloads again. She had bled heavily, so we had no choice but to put her down." Five replied.

Caprica Six sat beside Baltar, but the president of the Colonies did not notice her presence. He was beginning to realize that he was doomed no matter what happened. If the humans got hold of him, he would probably be deposed and executed for collaborating with the Cylons. If the Cylons took him with them when they fled (and he began to suspect that they were planning to do just that), he would probably be killed out of rage at the rebellion.

Caprica Six stood up and said, "We need to leave! This battle is lost!"

Three sneered and said, "Have you such little faith, Caprica?"

One of the Cavil's took up Six's position and retorted, "She's right. They're almost through to the detention facility, and they're less than two hundred meters from the spaceport. If we're going to leave, we need to leave now!"

So it was decided that the Cylons would evacuate, but not before Three said that she would stay behind to set off the nuke. The Cylons departed the office, and Caprica Six was left there with Baltar. "We need to go, Gaius! You'll be okay with us!"

Gaius couldn't take it anymore and broke down, setting his face wet with tears into his hands. "I wish I could just roll up and die!" he mournfully said.

"You're about to get your wish!" said Gaeta, with a pistol trained on Gaius' head.

Caprica Six put her hands up and asked Gaeta to put the gun down. Gaeta swung the gun over towards her and said, "No! I believed in him! I believed in his vision for us! But he didn't! All he believed in was himself!"

In that moment, Gaius decided that he needed to be sacrificed. He stood up and began to slowly walk over to Gaeta, who brought the pistol back to put its aim right on his heart. "Do it! I don't deserve to live! But you need to know something: the Cylons have a nuke here, and they plan to use it once they've fled the settlement."

At first, Gaeta didn't believe him, but he could read on Gaius' face that the fallen president was telling the absolute truth. "Go! Leave her, Gaius! Go find that nuke, and may the Gods forgive you!" Gaius made a gesture with the pistol and Caprica Six said, "Come Gaius! We need to find that nuke!"

Just as Six and Gaius rounded the corner to leave the ship, they heard a gunshot. "My Gods!" Gaius said, knowing that Gaeta had probably just blown his brains out. Six nodded and replied, "There's nothing you can do for him now, Gaius! We need to hurry!"

Outside the detention facility, Nova and Starbuck were pinned down from Centurion fire. "Frakking Centurions!" Starbuck said in frustration as she jumped out and shot at the Centurion, then jumped back around the corner when the Centurion's range of fire swung towards her position.

It was then that something caught Nova's eye. A pair of Black Tigers flew by, shooting up a pair of Cylon raiders. Nova searched inside her coat jacket for her communications link and activated it to try and get in touch with the fighters. "This is Captain Nova Forrester to Black Tigers! We're pinned down by gunfire! Can you lend us some assistance?"

"No go, Captain, but we know some guys who can! Cat, Hot Dog, can you help them out?" said Black Tigers leader Paul Conroy.

Galactica CAG Lt. Louanne "Kat" Katraine replied, "Roger that, Black Tiger leader! C'mon Hot Dog! You take the toaster in the tower and I'll take the one by the gate!"

Lt. Brendan "Hot Dog" Constanza answered back, "Will do, CAG! Getting a lock on the toaster right now! Making final approach!" Hot Dog swung his fighter around and began to make his run at the guard tower. The Centurion didn't even notice him, focusing on gunning down the resistors who were trying to break into the center. Hot Dog armed his missiles and fired them from point blank range, scoring a bull's eye and taking out the Centurion.

Cat fired her missiles right at the Centurion standing in front of the gate, and she scored a direct hit as well, which threw what was left of the Centurion right into the gate and bringing it down. Nova looked up from her position alongside Starbuck and saw that the approach to the gate was free. "Let's move!" Nova said as she was grabbing her Astro-Automatic rifle and running crouched forward towards the outside of the gate. Starbuck followed, as well as the rest of the resistors.

Meanwhile, Tory Foster had just sent Maya and her baby off with two guards, just like Roslin had asked her to do before the former president had been locked up. Foster was in charge of getting the civilians to the evacuation points, where they would board ships and get the hell out of New Caprica.

She ran down a corner to check to see if everyone was evacuated from the last road in her sector when suddenly she ran into two Centurions. Oh frak! Tory through as she watched them slowly walk towards her, their robotic fingers morphing into pistols and starting to take aim at her. That was when she saw a couple of figures in green sneak up to the robots and slap something onto their bodies. "Get down!" they yelled, leaping over to the sides as the Centurions looked around dumbfounded until they blew up a minute later.

The force of the blast knocked Tory off her feet and onto the ground, spraining her wrist. Her two saviors helped her to her feet, and she asked breathlessly, "Who are you guys?"

“We’re EDF Marines, ma’am! We’re here to help you guys get off this rock!” said the taller, stockier white male, who had a curious drawl to his voice. The shorter, darker male marine called his position over the radio, and they began to head towards the spaceport, which was close to being liberated.

Tigh watched in astonishment, as the three Centurions were sliced apart by the fire coming from one of the Black Tiger fighters. Over the radio, the youthful voice of Paul Conroy called out, “Approach clear to the spaceport! She’s all yours, Colonel!”

“I’ll be gods damned!” he said, picking up his own rifle and hauling ass beside Galen Tyrol. “Those damned Earthers know how to fly a fighter! Now let’s go get these bastards!”

Galen marched beside him, looking right as Tigh looked left for potential enemies. On the far side of the spaceport, Cylon heavy raiders began to take off in a hurry. Several managed to jump before they could be shot down, but a few were not so lucky. One of the Black Tigers shot down a Cylon raider, which pin wheeled into the ground, taking out five more heavy raiders.

They found the Raptors untouched by the Cylons and Tigh distributed the keys to those as well as the civilian transport ships. Before Tigh and Tyrol could get the one they were going to fly up and running, a couple of guys in green-gray came running up with Tory Foster. “Are you Colonel Tigh?” said the taller one.

“Who wants to know?” said the old man, not sure who exactly that was.

The tall man saluted and said, “I’m Sgt. Major Marcus Wallace, sir, and this here is Corporal Dante Logan! We’re from the EDF Marine Corps, and we landed not far from here!”

Tigh returned the salute, then asked, “Where are your men now?”

“Sir, we’re securing the route for the evacuees to make it to the transports! They should all be on board within the hour.”

“Good work, sergeant!” Tigh said, and then noticed a familiar figure run up towards them. “Gaeta? What the hell are you doing here?”

Gaeta had to take a moment to catch his breath, as he had run at full sprint, probably from Colonial One. “Sir...the Cylons have...a nuke...and they’re planning to use it!”

Tigh’s eyes shot wide open at the news. “Holy frak!”

Wallace got on the horn and told his troops, “This is Bubba to my fellow swamp rats! Toasters have a nuke somewhere in the settlement! Try to find it before they can use it! Bubba out!”

Tigh looked at the tall Marine and asked, “What the hell kind of name is Bubba?”

Back at the detention facility, Nova and Starbuck, along with their task force, had begun to free the prisoners. When they got to Sam Anders’ cell, Sam looked up and saw his wife for the first time in weeks. “Kara?” he asked disbelievingly.

“It’s me! Listen, we don’t have much time, hun! Take this rifle and lead the people out towards the evacuation points!” Kara said, taking just a moment to kiss and embrace her husband.

Sam was about to leave when he noticed Nova. "Who's this?" he asked.

Kara smiled and said, "A friend! I'll introduce you later! We have work to do!"

Sam went off with the others and began to help lead them to safety. Starbuck and Nova continued their search for Laura Roslin, and managed to find her minutes later, right after they had freed the pregnant Cally Tyrol from her cell. "Praise the Gods! Kara!" Laura said, leaping to her feet and embracing Starbuck like a long lost daughter.

"Good to see you again, Madam President!" Starbuck said, surprised that she had a tear in her eye. After she released the president, she turned and introduced Nova. Roslin extended her hand and Nova shook it, "Thank you, Captain Forrester, for all you've done!"

"You're welcome! We still have a few cells to go, though. Cally needs some help to get out, so could you assist her?" Nova asked of the president. Laura looked and saw that Cally was having a bit of trouble standing up. Roslin went over to her, put her arm over her shoulder, and said, "I'll get her safe. You two get the rest of us!"

"Yes, ma'am!" Starbuck said, and they turned back down the hall to free the last of the prisoners.

In orbit, on board Galactica, Adama watched as the last of the Cylon basestars fell at the hands of the three EDF cruisers. Four more had jumped in, but they soon found that they were the only ones left, and Captains Jordan, Eager, and Conroy turned their broadsides towards them and gave them lethal volley after lethal volley from their shock cannons. The basestars launched nukes in vain, but the anti-missile systems the EDF ships had intercepted the nukes long before they could cause harm.

XO Karl "Helo" Agathon picked up a message from the ground. "Sir! Colonel Tigh reports that the first civilian transports are airborne and starting to warp out towards the rendezvous point. Orders?"

Admiral Adama replied, "Bring our birds home! Yamato's Tigers can handle the rest. Contact Pegasus and have Lee jump to where the rest of the fleet is and standby for our return. We'll escort the rest back there."

"Aye sir!" Helo said and went to execute those orders.

"Damned if we didn't pull it off!" Adama said to himself, lightly pounding his fist into the central command station. He wouldn't be satisfied until the operation was over, but the tide was definitely turning their way.

Laura Roslin passed Cally onto some EDF Marines, who put her on a stretcher and began to work on her. "She's okay, ma'am! Just a little malnourished from her stay behind bars! We'll fix that with an IV feed." The female medic quickly and competently inserted the needle into Cally's arm and set up the IV bag on a little hook attached to the stretcher.

Tom Zarek walked up to Laura Roslin just then and said, "No slap in the face today, I take it?"

Instead of a slap, Laura Roslin gave her former political foe a big hug, "Tom! Glad to see you got out!"

"You and me both, Laura!" he replied with a smile. Then he turned and looked at Colonial One up on the hill. "Going up there, I presume?" Zarek asked.

"Yes. Seemed fitting. Unless you want to become president?" Roslin asked.

"I doubt they'd have me, Laura. You deserve to be back in office. I'll support you taking back the presidency." Zarek said as the two of them joined the resistors who began to make their way towards Colonial One.

"And what do you want in return, Tom?" Roslin asked.

"You could give me my old job back as vice-president." Zarek said.

Roslin took a moment to think about it as they walked up the hill, and then said, "I'll take that under advisement, but I'll probably do it anyway. Last thing I need is a political crisis as soon as we get into orbit!"

Zarek stuck his hand out and asked, "Deal?"

Roslin smiled and replied as she shook his hand, "Deal! Now let's go get my ship back!"

Tigh and his team managed to find the nuke when they walked right past it. "I'll be damned! They had it next to the farm entrance?" he said as the radiation detector clipped to one of the corporal's belts started to go off.

"Tell Cool Hand Luke to get over here!" Bubba said into the radio.

Tigh gave Bubba a strange look, and Bubba shrugged a reply, "I'll explain them later, Colonel. That is if Luke doesn't make a mistake."

Cool Hand Luke turned out to be a woman, Sergeant Lucy Maxwell. She was a short woman of barely five feet and looked so light that a gale could blow her away, but she went to work on disarming the nuke with a cool, professional air. Soon enough, she pulled away the trigger mechanism and announced, "She's disarmed, sir!"

"Good work, Luke!" Bubba smiled and patted the petite demolitions expert on the shoulder. Luke and her team took the disabled nuke away, and Bubba turned to Colonel Tigh and said, "Looks like we're done here, sir! Ready to head into space aboard one of those Raptors of yours?"

Tigh smiled for the first time in what seemed ages, and clasped Bubba on the shoulder, saying, "About damn time we got off this miserable rock, if you asked me! Besides, I need some flight time!" They all laughed at the remark and made their way back to the spaceport.

Tory looked around desperately for the two guards and Maya, but she couldn't find them in the crowd as it flowed aboard the transport. The ship's captain said, "Ma'am, we need to take off, we're full!"

"Not until we get those four others on board!" Tory protested.

"We have orders to take off right now, ma'am. Galactica is ordering us to the rendezvous point, so we have to go!" the captain said, urging her to get inside as the last of the crowd entered the transport.

Tory looked and looked, but saw no one else coming towards them. "Roslin's going to be pissed with me." Tory said to herself as she went into the transport, letting the captain shut the entrance ramp and begin the procedure to launch.

Maya and the two guards hadn't made it, caught in an ambush near the Oracle Selloi's tent. One of the Three's entered the tent, looking for the oracle that had told her that her dreams were real and that she would find the baby born of human and Cylon blood. "Frak! Where is she?" Three said, tearing up the place, looking for any sign of the baby. "Damn bitch lied to me!" she said as she threw down a plate. That's when she heard the cry of a child.

Caprica Six and Gaius Baltar had followed her to the oracle's tent. "She went in there, Gaius!" Six said, and Gaius started to go for his gun when he suddenly heard a baby beginning to cry. He looked around, walking from body to body, finally finding a baby underneath the body of a dead young woman.

It was then that his inner Six, the one inside his mind ever since he managed to survive the shock wave from the nuke that destroyed his home beside that lake, showed up beside him. "Congratulation, Gaius! You found our child!"

Caprica Six saw him holding the baby and said, "She's alive! It's a miracle from God!" Gaius held the baby, somehow knowing that this was the child of Sharon and Karl Agathon.

Three came up to them as Gaius held the baby, her eyes locked on the child. "Can I hold her?" she asked, and Gaius handed her over without thinking. Three looked at it as if it were her own child, and slowly began to walk away. As soon as she turned away, Gaius took out his gun and aimed it at her.

"No Gaius! She won't set off the nuke now!" Caprica Six said with resignation. "Let's go. We have to leave!" Gaius put his pistol away and reluctantly followed Six to one of the last Cylon raiders.

Nova Forrester and Kara Thrace-Anders were almost finished checking out the last of the cells when they came to a doorway that seemed to be to a much larger room than a cell. Nova set the charge and they both moved back so she could set it off. After the explosion, Starbuck raced in to see if anyone was in there, only to find something totally shocking. "Oh frak!" Starbuck said quietly.

"What is it?" Nova asked.

"It's...it's my old place from Delphi City!" Starbuck said, shaking her head in disbelief. "But it can't be!"

A voice called from down below. "Hello Kara! I knew you'd come!" The Cylon known as Leoben Conoy came into view and stopped at the end of the steps, and, in his arms, he held a young child who seemed to be two years old. The child had blond hair and looked right at Starbuck.

"What is that?" Starbuck asked, pointing at the child.

"Do you remember when you were on the farm? When we took one of your ovaries from you? We used one of your eggs and fertilized it with one of my sperm, and implanted it inside a human woman." Leoben smiled as a chill ran down Starbuck's spine as she began to suspect whom the child's mother was.

Leoben smiled and said, "Kacey, this is your mother, Kara!" The child smiled and waved at Kara, simply saying, "Hi!" in a gentle voice. Kara was so stunned that the rifle dropped from her hands and fell down the stairs.

Nova instinctively pointed her rifle at Leoben and said, "Listen you! I don't know what game you're playing at, but we're getting the hell off this rock! If that is Starbuck's child, then let it down and walk away from it!"

Leoben shook his head and said, "She's my child too, and I will be with the mother. You can't stop the work of God!"

"You're right!" Kara said, as she began to walk down the stairs, brushing off Nova's attempt to grab her to stop her. "If she's my child, then I should be with her, and with you!" Nova watched in horror as Kara walked up to Leoben and looked him in the eyes.

"Say it, Kara! Say it!" Leoben said.

"Say what?" Kara asked.

"That you love me!" Leoben asked.

Kara smiled, leaned in, and kissed him. She then said "I love you!" then promptly plunged a knife in the back of his neck. She took the child off of him as he began to drop down to the floor. Nova hurried down to the base of the stairs, aiming her gun at Leoben just in case he tried anything.

"It's okay, Kara! I'll see you again soon!" Leoben said as his final words before dying.

Kara asked Kacey if she was okay, and the child nodded her head vigorously. "C'mon, Nova! Let's go!" Starbuck said, holding the child in her arms as she began to ascend the stairs. Nova's mouth was open, in shock at what had just taken place. At the top of the stairs, Sam Anders entered the room with his rifle up in an aiming position, but dropped it down as soon as he saw Kara climbing the stairs.

"Kara, Nova, we need to get to the transport!" Anders said. He then nodded at the child, and asked, "Who's she?"

"I'll explain later." Kara then walked out of the room and out into the hallway in a daze. Nova followed up the stairs and watched as Kara walked down the hallway, Kacey in her arms.

"What the hell went on in here?" Anders asked Nova.

Nova looked down at the deceased Leoben, her mouth still open and in shock. "...I'm not sure. He said..." Nova pointed her rifle at the fallen Cylon. "He said that she was that child's mother!"

"What?" Anders exclaimed. He shook his head and said, "This has to do with the time she was shot and taken to that breeding farm on Caprica." He saw incomprehension in Nova's face and quickly added, "I'll explain later. Like I said, we need to leave now!" Nova nodded and followed Anders up the stairs and out of the detention facility.

Back on board Yamato, Derek Wildstar leaned back in his seat, exhausted from the battle. A hand patted him on the shoulder, and he looked up to see that it was his old friend, Stephen Sandor. "Good work, Derek! You still got it!"

“Thanks!” Derek replied. “And thanks to you for putting the old lady back together! I never imagined you’d have her up and running this fast, especially given the lack of resources we had to work with!”

“Agreed! But you and Wendy managed to get us what we needed, when we needed it.” Stephen turned and looked towards one of the turbo lifts and added, “Speaking of Wendy...”

Derek turned around in his seat and saw that Wendy Singleton had just come onto the bridge. “Any news on Homer?” she asked.

“He’s okay. He’s on board a Raptor, with Nova, and some of the Colonials. They’re heading towards Galactica.” Derek replied. “Shall we take one of the Cosmo Foxes over to see our better halves?”

Wendy smiled and the two were soon off to board the multipurpose two-seater space plane, leaving Sandor in command of Yamato for now. They didn’t need long to get into their flight suits to head over to Adama’s flagship and meet up with some of those that they had rescued.

Later that night, back in her quarters aboard Colonial One, Laura Roslin prepared for bed. It had been a long night of getting used to the place again. She knelt down in prayer to the Gods, using the blood stained copy of the Sacred Scrolls that Elosa had with her when she perished on Kobol. Once she was done, she put the holy book back up and got into bed, falling asleep quickly.

It was then that the dream came to her. When she woke up in the middle of the night, she went to her office and immediately called Admiral Adama, asking him to join her over at Colonial One. He had just woken up from his own dream, according to him, and didn’t hesitate to board a Raptor and head over to Colonial One.

Laura knew he was shaken when he appeared before her somewhat disheveled in his uniform, which was very much unlike him. She was still dressed in her nightwear, which led him to ask, “I take it that this is not a formal visit?”

She shook her head and said, “No. I’ve been having dreams again.”

Adama replied, “That’s funny. So have I!”

Kobol

Inside the Tomb of Athena

The being touched the mind of the old man that had come inside this tomb almost two years ago now. She had taken the advice that Laura Roslin had given him in her own dream and did one better, reaching out to touch the minds of all that had been in that temple that day. Sadly, one of those was missing, but she found the minds of Kara Thrace-Anders and Lee Adama, and touched their minds with the same dreams. Even now, they were headed over to Colonial One to discuss those dreams.

She hoped that they believed in the dreams she sent them, because they would not be dreams for long. They needed to know what was coming, and they needed to be prepared for it.

Now she had one last task: to touch the mind of some of the Earthers that had aided in the rescue of the Colonials on New Caprica. She found two candidates as they slept together aboard Yamato, and she gave similar dreams to Nova and Derek, hoping that they would understand.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Eight

Fallout

Phoenix Station

September 21, 2214

One would think that getting off New Caprica thanks to the help of some of the Earth Defense Forces under the command of General Wendy Singleton-Glitchman. One would assume that the government of Earth would be happy to see cousins from deep within the galaxy show up, especially after the Gamilon war and the “five years of fire” that came after that had claimed so many lives.

Sadly, though, the Earth Defense Force chose this inopportune moment to play politics. It wasn’t just a simple “no” that they gave the Colonials, but, as they said in their statement, “If the Yamato and the other renegade EDF ships attempt to settle the so-called humans onto Earth, they will be shot down as they try to land.”

Laura Roslin was surprised when Wendy crumpled up the statement and threw it across the room. “Bastards!” Wendy said loudly as Admiral Adama, Nova, and Derek looked on. “I don’t believe it! We have so much land on Earth that we could easily settle you somewhere and still have thousands of square kilometers of wide-open spaces for the rest of us! But those bastards want to make it seem like that landing your people here would be a major inconvenience!” She leaned back in the office chair that had been Sandor’s before the arrival of the task force under her command.

Derek added, “They even ruled out any of our colonial worlds, even though I had personal assurances from several of the governing councils from colony worlds that they would take you in. The leadership of Alpha Centauri was chomping at the bit to have you, because they are so short of manpower and have plenty of space on the main home world in the system. When they made their counterproposal, the Council told them that if they even sent the invitation, they would send out a fleet to arrest the leadership for treason!”

Laura Roslin sighed and sat down on the synthetic leather couch inside Sandor’s office. “This is like a nightmare! We came so far, and now we can’t even go to Earth!” She took a deep breath and continued, “I’m not mad at your folks, General Glitchman, but this is something that is liable to cause many in our fleet to turn against you!”

Derek responded, “We understand, and we’re working on an angle to try and turn public opinion against the Council.”

Adama gave Derek a double take, “Are you suggesting overthrowing your own government?”

Derek looked at Nova before answering, unsure of what to say. They had talked about this before, on numerous occasions. He had also had conversations with Wendy as well as her

predecessor and grandfather, General Singleton. It was something that made him uneasy, but the fact was that the time might have come to bring about a change in Earth government.

The Council had been formed when the Gamilons started sending planet bombs down onto the Earth's surface. These bombs were launched from the Pluto base, and were heavily armed with defensive weaponry to take out any ships that tried to stop them. Billions died in the first few waves of attacks, and the various Earth governments had decided to unify under a military government to fight the war. Together, they had built the underground cities that gave the survivors the chance to make it long enough for the Yamato to go to Iscandar and get the Cosmo DNA machine to reverse the damage that the radiation had done to Earth.

In the fifteen years since, the Council had never once considered giving up power to a civilian government. Attempts by the people to bring this about had been rebuffed, but, thankfully, those rejections had all been peaceful so far. But Derek knew that the people were boiling with anger about their government, and that the ten years of peace that had been brought about might fall apart due to civil war.

What scared Derek the most was the fact that he would probably have to lead the side that wanted democratic change, and that would make him a target. What's more, his own daughter was on Earth, and if he tried to overthrow the government, then it could result in Miyuki being kidnapped by the Council and be held hostage in an attempt to force Derek and Nova's hand.

"I...I don't know, Admiral. I don't want to overthrow them. Just get the public to convince them to allow your people to settle on Earth, or at least on one of the colonial worlds. I know several members of the media, as well as some influential people who could come to our side. What happens if I do this..." Derek shrugged his shoulders and sat down on the couch opposite from Roslin.

Meanwhile, back in the Command Information Center of the Galactica, Colonel Saul Tigh had taken back his position as XO of the battlestar. Newly promoted Captain Karl "Helo" Agathon maintained his post as the tactical officer. Lt. Felix Gaeta would normally have been there, but Adama had not yet decided if he should let him come back to his old post, knowing that he had been former president Baltar's aide before and during the Cylon occupation.

Things were tense on what Derek considered the bridge of the battlestar, as Tigh didn't fully trust Agathon, mainly because of the tactical officer's affair with one of the Sharon Valerii's. He had even fathered a child with her, but they all knew she was dead. Except for Adama, Roslin, and a select few others, but Tigh was not one of those select.

Things were, for now, calm, but Tigh couldn't relax. The Cylons were still out there, and they had even more of a cause now to come after them. The fact that the Earth government had decided not to allow them to settle there didn't help matters. It also didn't help that he was still grieving for his wife, who had died from the breeding attempts that the Cylons conducted on some of the Colonists.

Meanwhile, in the crew quarters, Starbuck was relaxing with her husband, who was now fully recovered from his bout with pneumonia. Adama had placed her on temporary leave, and he had told her that he was leaning towards having her act as a liaison officer to the EDF task force under the command of Wendy Singleton-Glitchman.

But Starbuck wasn't in a good mood, as the young girl that the Cylon Leoben had introduced to her had, in fact, turned out to actually be her child. Dr. Cottle on Galactica had checked the DNA from Starbuck as well as that from the DNA from the deceased version of

Leoben that they had spaced almost two years ago. When he found that they had matched, Starbuck didn't believe it, and demanded a second opinion.

Dr. Sakezo Sane was a short, old, balding man who was the very example of eccentric. Starbuck had asked for him to check on the samples, and he had agreed. They had met in the infirmary aboard Yamato, a ship that Starbuck had found fascinating. Those within the Colonial Forces had considered Galactica a relic, but Yamato was even older than Adama's ship was by over two centuries.

Then she spotted IQ-9 in Dr. Sane's office and her demeanor changed. Adama had told her of the robot, but she had not been prepared to see him. Even though he was not a Cylon, she couldn't help thinking of him as one. IQ-9 was short, stocky, and red, far different than the sleek metallic Centurions that Starbuck had blown up on New Caprica.

She gave the blood sample without hesitation, and she figured that Sane had been warned that Starbuck would not take kindly to IQ-9 or his antics. She found it bizarrely funny that a robot could be a skirt chaser, but she didn't laugh here and now. Right at this moment, she wanted to know if Kacey was, in fact, her kid.

The test would take some time to run, so Nova gave Starbuck a tour of the Yamato. Nova was without a command now, since the Andromeda II was considered unsalvageable and had been destroyed from orbit after the Cylons left, just in case the Cylons came back. The last thing the Cylons needed to get their hands on was wave motion technology, Derek had said, or else they stood little chance against them.

Nova hated losing the ship, but she seemed to Starbuck to be taking it well. "Yamato has always been my home, and being back here after she fell on Aquarius."

Starbuck had to remember that Nova meant the water world of Aquarius, and not the Colonial world of Aquaria. It had struck both sides as rather odd as to how much they had in common, such as language and some cultural references. According to what the Colonials had learned about the Earthers, the Colonial gods had been the same ones that the ancient Greeks had worshipped. The Earthers no longer worshipped them, instead worshipping various deities from various religions.

When the results came in, Starbuck was thunderstruck. "I ran it through every test I could to be sure, Mrs. Anders, and the results came back positive: Kacey is your daughter."

It was then that IQ-9 chose to interject himself. "The match was 99.99999 percent accurate."

"You shut up, you frakking toaster!" Starbuck said coldly to IQ-9, turning towards him and giving him a look that would have frozen a human. IQ-9 looked around and asked, "What did I say?" That's when Starbuck went for him.

Nova caught her before Starbuck could do any harm to the robot. Starbuck didn't have a weapon, so it was unlikely she could harm the tough robot. Sane escorted IQ-9 out of the office as Starbuck broke down in Nova's arms.

"Those tin bastards can't do this to me!" Starbuck said as the tears flowed from her eyes. Nova just held her, letting the young woman get it all out of her. Starbuck had told Nova about what had happened to her when she had gone back to Caprica to retrieve the arrow of Apollo. She had been shot and wounded in an ambush, and was taken by the Cylons to an abandoned hospital, where one of her ovaries had been taken out for breeding purposes.

After a few minutes, Starbuck began to calm down, and Nova had slipped out to let Starbuck lay down onto the couch. She had served as a nurse in Sane's office back during the journey to Iscandar, so she knew exactly where Sane kept the sedatives to help Starbuck relax and get some rest. With practiced techniques, she administered the shot to Starbuck, and soon she was fast asleep.

Nova had gotten Starbuck some spare quarters aboard Yamato, so she was resting in one of the bunkrooms. The old ship was halfway staffed, so there was plenty of room. Samuel Anders came over aboard a Raptor when Nova called him, and Nova met him on the hanger deck.

"How's she doing now?" Anders said as they made their way off the deck and into a turbo car.

"She's resting. I gave her a sedative to help calm her down and get her to rest." Nova replied.

"Wait!" Anders blinked. "You're a nurse?"

Nova smiled at him and said, "Among other things." She told him about all that she had done during that first mission to Iscandar. She was one of the few women on board the ship, and all of the others were technicians of one sort or another. She had trained as a radar technician before switching over to nursing as the crisis on Earth worsened, figuring that she needed to heal those around her who were dying of radiation poisoning.

Those two skills got her aboard Yamato, and she showed other skills as well. She had a great ability with a pistol and a rifle, and could hold her own in combat. Anders was amazed at all that Nova was capable of, and seemed to be feeling a bit embarrassed.

"You should be proud in your own right, Sam! From what I've heard, you never even served in the military, but fought on Caprica and New Caprica like a hardened soldier." Nova complimented him.

Sam Anders shrugged it off, which impressed Nova in another way. "We just made it up as we went along. Hell, all I knew of combat was what I saw in movies and read in books!"

The two of them laughed as the doors to the turbolift opened up. It was a short walk to the bunk room where Starbuck lay sleeping. She stirred as the two of them entered the room. "Kara?" Sam said.

"Sam?" Starbuck said as she looked up sleepily at him. Sam pulled up a chair and sat by her as she sat up in bed. "How long have I been out?"

"A couple of hours. I figured you needed just enough time to rest after what happened." Nova said.

Starbuck nodded and lay back down. Nova left the two of them alone and went back up to the bridge where Derek and Wendy were. As she walked back to the turbolift, she pondered her relationship with Starbuck. Nova was only a little over a decade older than the young Viper pilot, but she seemed to look at her like she was almost a daughter to her.

That brought her round to thoughts of her actual flesh and blood daughter, Miyuki. She was ten now, and she was safe with Wendy's parents, from what Wendy had told her. Wendy's

parents had opted to go into medicine instead of the military, which had not set well with her grandfather, but all was forgiven when Wendy opted to continue the family tradition after a generation gap.

Wendy, Derek, and Nova decided that what they needed to talk about could wait until they got to the conference room a level below, so they got into the turbolift and descended down to the meeting area. Memories flooded back into Nova's mind of all that had happened in those years, and a part of her expected to see old Captain Avatar to come in with his gruff voice and quiet demeanor.

It occurred to Nova that Adama possessed the same kind of gravitas that Avatar had. Neither of them had expected to be where they were, and both had managed to survive where soldiers whom they felt more capable than themselves had perished. But Adama, like Avatar, had managed to bring his people a lot farther than could reasonably be expected. As Derek had told her earlier, it was Adama's original plan that they used to execute the rescue operation, with only minor adaptations to factor in the EDF influence.

"So what do we do about what's going on back home, guys?" Wendy asked.

"Do we have the people in place to take down the Council? You're asking for soldiers to pick one side or another, and that's always tricky." Nova said.

"Not if Derek is the one who leads the way! He's still idolized by many within the EDF, especially among the younger officers, so he could bring many of those on the fence around." Wendy countered.

Nova turned to Derek and looked at her husband. She knew that he uneasily wore the mantle of hero. One of the reasons he left the Star Force was from the stress and strain of five years of almost non-stop combat. She knew that he had secretly sought treatment for the traumas he had suffered during all of the fighting, but he couldn't bear to reveal the pain he was going through to anyone else. Not even the woman he loved.

Derek looked rather uncomfortable at being the leader of an insurrection, and Nova knew why. Even though it had been fourteen years since they got back from Iscandar, and ten years since the Dinguil attempt to flood Earth had been thwarted, people still regarded the Star Force as heroes, and, since Derek led them, he was the most popular figure among them.

"We need to get in touch with other surviving members of the Star Force. See what they think before we attempt to pull this off." Derek said, knowing that they would all join up if he led them.

Wendy said, "That should not be a problem, as we have many of those who served here at Phoenix Station already. I can get in touch with the others and see if they'll come here and meet with us."

While they met, another meeting was taking place, this time on board the Pegasus. Adama and Roslin had been joined by the new vice-president of the Colonies, Tom Zarek, for a meeting with Commander Lee "Apollo" Adama, and his XO (as well as wife), Dee Adama. The meeting was just to brief them on what was going on in relation to Earth, but Adama had other items on his personal agenda, some that didn't include the president and vice president.

Some decisions were going to have to be made in order for the fleet to function properly, and one of them involved his own son and daughter-in-law. Military protocol said that it was bad for morale for married couples to serve together, much less have the XO married to her

commanding officer. He had only assigned her to the post out of necessity, and now that they were almost completely staffed now, new arrangements would have to be made.

Then there was the matter of Starbuck and what to do with her. A year ago, Adama wouldn't hesitate to assign her as CAG to his ship's Vipers, but Louanne "Kat" Katraine had more than proven herself capable of leading Galactica's Vipers. Since Starbuck and Kat didn't necessarily get along anymore, Adama didn't think it wise to demote Kat. The question was then if Starbuck could lead Pegasus' Vipers, given the rift she had now with Lee and Dee.

Of course, there was the decision that he was leaning towards: making Starbuck liaison officer to the EDF. It seemed too much of an easy out for him. Besides, Starbuck may be too unstable for something like this, especially given the fact that she now apparently had a daughter thanks to the efforts of the Cylons.

Lee Adama's quarters were brightly lit and expansive, larger than his own command quarters aboard Galactica. To the admiral, they seemed too big and too impersonal. He couldn't imagine living here. Lee seemed to be at home here, though, and he appeared to be in a much better mood these days. Before Yamato had arrived, Lee had let himself go, gaining weight and becoming too much of a whiner for his father to bear. He wasn't too proud of himself either, though, as he had done the same thing.

But the arrival of the Earthers had rejuvenated everyone, and the elder Adama had finally shaved off the mustache he had grown ever since Gaius Baltar had taken office. Now that Baltar was long gone (and probably dead, for all he knew) and with Roslin back in office, he began to feel better about the fate of the human race (or his side of it at least).

Once the official meeting was over, Roslin and Zarek retired to the Raptor, leaving the admiral alone to speak to his son about personal matters. "How you holding up, son?" Adama asked in his soft voice.

"Fine, dad. Why do you ask?" Lee replied nervously. Dee stayed silent by her husband's side, looking like she was holding up a brave front.

"I have something that I need to speak to you about, and I doubt you and Dee will like it." Adama said. "Now that we are back to virtually full strength on both battlestars, we need to adjust our duty rosters back to pre-New Caprica levels."

Lee's lips grimaced and he curtly nodded, "I understand, dad. Dee and I have talked it over, and she's more than willing to step down as XO."

Adama nodded and said, "Well, that solves one problem. Dee can serve as Communications officer here, and we can transfer Hoshi over to Galactica. As for your new XO, I am leaning towards..."

Lee interrupted his father. "It's can't be Starbuck...sir!"

"I wasn't going to say Starbuck, Lee. I was going to recommend Helo." Adama countered, and he could tell the conversation was about to take a turn much earlier than he had expected.

"Oh." Lee said. He briefly looked at his wife, who gave a subtle nod, then he turned back to his father and said, "That's good, dad. What about Sharon, though?"

"She'll remain on Galactica for the time being, but I recommend that you start building a brig for her like we have on my ship. If Helo works out well for you as an XO, I'll transfer her over." Adama coughed nervously and began to switch the subject.

Before he could, Lee interjected by saying, "You want to talk about Starbuck, don't you?"

Adama nodded, and Dee let out a frustrated sigh as she leaned back in her chair with an annoying sound. The admiral started, "Look, I know that what happened can't be erased or forgotten..."

Dee pointedly said, "She hit on my own husband right in front of me, sir! With all due respect, I personally never want to see her again!" The expression on his daughter-in-law's face meant that her mind was set in stone, a look that Adama was quite familiar with from that same expression from his former wife.

Adama took a sip of water from the mug sitting in front of him, giving him a chance to compose his thoughts. He expected that reaction, just not the ferocity. So much for Starbuck becoming Pegasus' CAG, he thought. Now he was convinced that Starbuck would be assigned liaison officer to the EDF, and he thought it might do her some good.

"I know she was drunk, dad, but that does not excuse what she did! I know of how you think of her as the daughter you never had, but she crossed a line that she should not have ever come close to, especially since she is a married woman herself!" Lee said. Adama could tell from his tone that Lee regretted things went down the way they had, but there could be no forgiveness for Starbuck, or at least not now.

"Fine. I'll have to choose another CAG for you, then, unless you can recommend a candidate for me?" Adama asked.

"What about Catman?" Lee asked. "He's improved a hell of a lot since you yanked him from his post as CAG when I...did what I did." Catman was Captain George Birch, who had been briefly promoted to CAG when Lee had assisted President Roslin to escape from custody after she had influenced Starbuck to disobey orders and go to Caprica. Birch had proved to be inexperienced in the position, and Adama had to knock him back down to his previous position.

However, the young pilot had improved drastically since then, so Adama nodded and said, "I'll process the paperwork, son. Keep an eye on him, though. He may need some guidance after what happened last time."

For the first time since he arrived, Lee smiled at his father and said, "Yes sir!" The meeting ended shortly afterwards and Adama made his way back to the Raptor.

"They didn't bite, did they?" Roslin said, meaning about the plan to see if Lee would accept Starbuck as his CAG.

"Nope. I guess we'll just have to go with what we agreed upon, providing Starbuck wants the position." Adama replied. Adama asked the pilot to locate Starbuck, and when he was informed that she and her husband had returned to Galactica, he nodded and ordered the pilot to return to his flagship.

Starbuck entered Adama's quarters, and the old man put away his picture of his deceased son Zak. He remembered his anger at Starbuck when she admitted to him that she had passed Zak in Basic Flight when he had actually failed, which led to his death during training.

That anger had long ago subsided, because Adama knew that Starbuck agonized over Zak's loss just as much as he had. If he hadn't died, Starbuck may very well have been his daughter in law by now.

After she sat down, he got right to the point. "You know that it would be awkward to put you back in charge of the Vipers after Kat has done so much to fuse this fighter group together..."

"Are you saying she's a better pilot than I am, sir?" Starbuck said challengingly.

Adama didn't rise to it, and brushed it away like a wayward hair in his face. "It's not a matter of piloting, it's a matter of leadership, and the fact is that she's been in charge of my Vipers while you've been making a life for yourself down on New Caprica."

Starbuck nodded, realizing that Adama did have a point. "And I guess the Pegasus is out too?"

Adama reluctantly nodded, adding, "If things didn't happen like they did..."

Starbuck butted in, "So I guess they can't forgive me for being a drunken ass?"

Adama replied, "You admitted you still had a thing for my son, and being drunk sometimes has the effect of letting loose the truth when you most need to keep it tied up inside you. What would you have done if Dee had made a play for Sam, drunk or not?"

Starbuck seemed to be deflated, barely managing to get out, "I don't know."

Adama then gave her a bit of hope. "I've approached General Singleton about having you serve as our liaison officer, and she's accepted the transfer, pending your acceptance."

Starbuck blinked at the offer, clearly being taken by surprise. "What about Sam?"

"He'd be allowed to be with you, of course."

Starbuck then asked, "What about Kacey?"

Adama nodded and said, "We've already thought that through. It would be best to have her aboard Yamato under Dr. Sane's care, especially if word gets out of her part-Cylon origins."

Starbuck sighed and thought for a moment before saying, "I know what the DNA says, but I can't accept that this is my daughter."

"It is, Kara. The question is what do you plan to do about it?"

After the meeting, Starbuck went down to her bunk area and found Sam Anders there. "What'd he want?"

"He's assigned me the position of liaison officer to the EDF and I've accepted. We have to get packed and move over to Yamato ASAP." Starbuck said matter-of-factly.

Sam laughed without humor and asked, "And I have no say about this?"

Starbuck wasn't having it, "Look, Sam, the fact is that I can't be CAG here, and certainly not on Pegasus, and the last thing I want to be is stuck on the bridge. At least on Yamato I have a

chance to do some flying. Singleton has said I can be checked out on those Black Tigers and Cosmic Zeros they fly.”

“And what am I to do?” Sam asked. Before his wife could say anything, he added, “It’s a legitimate question, Kara! Yeah, I sort of was a soldier on Caprica and New Caprica, but I’m not properly trained. I’m just a pyramid player who has no idea where I’m supposed to go from here!”

Starbuck sat down on the bench and said, “Maybe you could teach those Earthers pyramid?”

Anders shrugged and said, “It’s a start. I just wished they’d make up their minds as to whether we can land on Earth or not.”

“That’s not Singleton’s fault. She may be head of the council, but she doesn’t have the votes to change their minds. At least not yet. I just hope things change soon, or else the people in the fleet will get restless again. Now will you help me start getting packed?” Starbuck asked. Sam agreed and began to help put away their few belongings.

As the Raptor bearing Starbuck and Sam Anders left for Yamato, another Raptor came aboard Galactica, this one bearing President Roslin. She entered Adama’s office to the sound of Caprican opera. “I didn’t expect you to be a fan of Adalias, Admiral.” Roslin said as she sat down on the couch off to one side of the quarters where Adama lived.

“I like some of her work, but I’m more into Queliard and Bronchus. So what did you want to talk about, Laura?” he asked.

“I’ve been having some strange dreams.” Laura said.

“Really? That makes two of us!” Adama said as he broke out a bottle of ambrosia and a couple of glasses. He set one down in front of Roslin and poured her a shot, then did the same for himself as he settled down in his favorite chair. “What kinds of dreams have you been having?”

“Remember when we were in the Tomb of Athena?” Laura asked. After Adama nodded, Laura continued, “Well, the last few nights, I’ve been having a dream of someone inside the tomb, telling me that we should return there and that it was very important.”

Adama sipped some of the ambrosia before answering. “I had the same dream last night. Was it a tall woman, in a brown-colored dress?”

“That’s right! She was raven haired and looked to be like something older than the gods, yet stunningly beautiful.” Roslin said, as her eyes were wide with wonder.

Adama noticed that Roslin’s glass was empty, so he poured her some more ambrosia. “She reminded me of a girl I pursued back in high school. Anyway, why do you think she wants us to return there? Do you think this has to do with the Cylons?”

“That’s just it, Bill! When I asked her if it involved them, she said, ‘this enemy will force your kind and the Cylons to work together, or else you both shall fall!’” Roslin gulped down a bit more of the drink as Adama sipped some more of his own.

“If we go to the Earthers about this, they’ll think we’re crazy. Then again, with the way things are going with the EDF, we may have no choice but to go back there.” Adama said.

Just then, his phone rang, and he picked it up. “Sir, it’s from the Yamato. Something’s come up!”

Captain Nova Forrester and Derek Wildstar walked out of the turbo car and onto the bridge as General Wendy Forrester stood behind the combat chief’s position. “What did they want with all of us?” Nova asked.

“I’m not sure, Nova. They insisted that they wanted us all together when they replied to our latest proposal about the Colonials.” Wendy turned to the communications officer and told him to put them through.

Generals Didier Beauchamps, Royce Albion, and Maurice Fielding had some very odd smiles on their faces. “Good afternoon, General Singleton! I see you have everyone accounted for, including Homer Glitchman.”

“Yes we have him here as well!” Wendy looked over at her husband as he stood besides her, having come onto the bridge just moments before Derek and Nova had.

“Good. Because we have something to show you. Something that will make you more cooperative in your dealings with us!” The picture switched to a hidden camera that was focusing on the Glitchman residence.

“What the hell?” Wendy said.

Derek and Wendy walked out onto the balcony and seemed to be just talking. “What the hell is going on here?” Nova asked, adding, “Why would they be spying on you two?”

Albion said in his thick Texas drawl, “You’ll see soon enough!” His voice sounded eager with anticipation.

Then it happened. For some reason, Wendy wandered close to Derek and he took her in his arms. Nova began to get a funny feeling in her stomach, but her mind was telling her that it was just an embrace of friends. Maybe they were just missing Homer and me, she thought.

But then they kissed and kissed passionately, and the whole world began to crumble around her. She looked at Derek, wanting to see anger in his eyes at the deception, but when she turned to him, his eyes were focused on the ground. Tears were running from his eyes.

“Derek...did you...and Wendy?” Nova asked, her voice shaky with emotion.

Derek nodded and said, “It was a mistake. A terrible mistake. I’m so ashamed of myself!”

Nova looked at her friend Wendy, and found that Wendy couldn’t look at her. No, this...this has to be a joke! Nova thought, but the reality hit when Albion said, “If you continue to oppose us, we’ll show this to the media and shoot your credibility straight to hell! So much for Derek Wildstar the hero!”

Beauchamps coldly addressed Wendy, “We knew that you might be taken over for your grandfather, and we needed some aces up our sleeve! Who knew we would come up with a royal flush!”?

Fielding's precise English was not as menacing as Beauchamps' Gallic accent, but it struck home nonetheless. "We expect a more reasonable proposal soon, or else we go to the media about this. And when that's done, we'll talk about who really runs the EDF!"

Albion then cut the communication off, and the four of them stood there stunned. Everyone else looked at them with shocked expressions on their faces. Sandor's jaw was hanging open, never expecting to hear something like this.

Nova couldn't take it anymore. She had to escape. She bolted for the turbo car and got in. Derek cried out "Nova!" but his wife did not respond as the door shut.

"How could you?" Homer asked in a broken voice.

Wendy said, "I...we started talking about what would happen if you and Nova were lost months ago when you were on the Avatar. We had went out to dinner and drank some wine, then came back and drank some more wine, talking about old times." Wendy barely could get the story out as her voice racked with sobs. "We started talking about what we'd do if we lost both of you, and by the time we'd walked out onto the balcony, we'd consumed an entire bottle of red wine."

Homer looked at Derek and asked, "Did you two...?"

Derek simply nodded and said, "I'm sorry, Homer. We...we just went too far and did something we shouldn't have!"

Homer's eyes were running red with tears, but he walked over and suddenly embraced his fellow member of the Star Force. "I forgive you, Derek!" he said as he sobbed.

"But, you can't! Not after what we've done to you!" Derek said.

"I have to! We all make mistakes, Derek!" Homer turned to Wendy and said, "I would be lying if I said that I wasn't disappointed mightily in the both of you, but I love both of you so much that I can't help but to forgive the both of you!" He embraced his wife and kissed her. Derek didn't know what to think, because he felt so ashamed at betraying his wife Nova.

Starbuck had settled into her bunk and after breaking it in with Sam, she set out to explore a bit of the ship while her husband slept. The crew knew who she was and why she was here, and they did their best to make her feel welcome, which overwhelmed her somewhat.

She came to the observation deck and pressed the button to enter. When the doors opened, she found Nova kneeling on the floor. Starbuck had no idea why Nova was like this, but when she heard the older woman sobbing, Starbuck asked, "Nova, what's wrong?"

When Nova didn't answer, Starbuck walked up to her and knelt down beside her. That's when she saw the pistol in Nova's hand pointed at the captain's chin.

"Oh Gods!" Starbuck said in surprise.

"Leave, Kara! Please! I don't want any witnesses!" Nova said through her tears.

"What's wrong? At least tell me that, Nova!" Starbuck asked softly.

"Derek...he...he..." Nova bent her head forward and placed the muzzle of the gun against her forehead.

“Give me the gun, Nova!” Starbuck told Nova, putting out her hand in front of her. “No matter what he did, it’s not worth killing yourself!”

“But...he cheated on me with Wendy!” Nova admitted, but Starbuck noticed that the grip had loosened on the gun.

“Oh my Gods!” Starbuck exclaimed in shock. “Nova, think about your daughter back home! Miyuki needs you!”

Nova shook her head and said, “How can I face her after this?”

“And I need you, Nova!” That made Nova look up at Starbuck, and she noticed that the young Viper pilot’s eyes were also filled with tears.

“Please Nova! Hand over the gun!” Starbuck asked again, this time even more gently.

Nova looked down at the Astro Automatic pistol in her hand and willed it to move over to Starbuck’s outstretched hand. She laid it in Starbuck’s palm, and then collapsed on the floor in tears. Starbuck pushed the pistol to the side and picked Nova up and held her. “It’s going to be okay, Nova! Trust me, I’ll do what I can to help you make it okay!”

Nova looked up into her eyes and then nodded. She started to get up off the floor, but her legs collapsed on her. Starbuck managed to grab her and help her stand up. “Thank you, Kara! You...you saved my life!”

Starbuck smiled and said, “I’m glad I did!” They both stood there in an embrace, and Starbuck let Nova cry on her shoulder.

When Nova was done, Nova took off her cap and straightened her hair as best she could. “What do you plan on doing about this?” Starbuck asked.

“I don’t know. I have to sit down and think about this. I never expected Derek to ever cheat, much less with Wendy!” Nova said.

Starbuck said, “Where will you sleep tonight?”

“I don’t know. I’ll find something. Thankfully the ship is only half full right now.” Nova then turned towards the door and said, “Would you like to go to the mess hall and have dinner? It’s late, but I’m sure the cooks can whip up something for us this late!” Starbuck smiled and they walked out together.

Back on Earth, Albion, Beauchamps, and Fielding were smiling in their sunlit office in Megalopolis. They had gained valuable political leverage against their enemies. “So much for their plans! Like I believe them when they say that those people they supposedly rescued from that planet are from another part of the galaxy!” Fielding said as he sipped his scotch.

“That doesn’t matter! As long as we have control of the Council, they can’t stand against us! And the president sees things our way!” Beauchamps replied.

“He’d better, or else...” Albion made the gesture of a noose going around his neck and pulling tight. Both of his power mad companions laughed, not knowing what they were doing was putting their own world at the greatest risk since the Gamilon War.

Just inside the rim of the Milky Way Galaxy

The Maddarens had just invaded the sparsely populated system of Avaria and had conquered the citizens living on the three habitable worlds orbiting the sun. Not before killing millions in their campaign, some just for sport. The invasion had been an easy one, and gave them a foothold inside the galaxy.

Their eyes were focused on one planet: Earth. They would build their strength slowly, and would only strike when they had enough of a force to completely overwhelm the Earthers.

However, these invaders from Andromeda had someone watching them as well. From the bridge of his flagship, Gamilon Leader Desslok watched the enemies' ships slowly surround the habitable planets, and he suspected that the people in the system were going to be put to the whip in serving their new masters.

"Shall we attack, sir?" asked Deslok's longtime aide, Talan.

"We don't have a big enough force to defeat them, Talan. Attacking them would be futile. We do have an option, though. Plot a course for Earth! We'll take what we've seen to Wildstar and let them know that they're in danger again!"

Talan bowed before his leader and went about carrying out his orders. Deslok looked at the enemy, but thought of his former ones, who were now his friends. His one greatest regret was the war against the humans fifteen of their years ago. It was the epitome of foolishness, and resulted in many Gamilons dying when Deslok had lured Yamato to his home world in order to destroy the ship.

But the day came when he had an epiphany, and it was thanks to Nova and Derek. Ever since then, he vowed to be there if they needed him to protect the very planet he vowed once to conquer. Because if he were ever to be redeemed for his past evils, Earth was the key to that, and he would do whatever was necessary to protect that place.

The Gamilon fleet warped out without the Maddarens noticing them. They made their way to Earth, not knowing what had transpired both on Megalopolis and at Phoenix Station.

Phoenix Rising

Chapter Nine

The Best Laid Plans of Dicey Men...

Earth Defense Headquarters
Megalopolis
September 28, 2214

The generals who sat on the EDF Council had thought that they had discredited General Singleton and Derek Wildstar. The media ate up the story and the pundits were having a field day with it. It seemed only a matter of time before the public turned on the Star Force.

The public did turn against something, only it wasn't the Star Force.

Inside General Beauchamp's office, he, along with Generals Albion and Fielding, were thunderstruck at the civilians protesting outside EDF headquarters. "Bring the muckrakers down!" echoed against the walls of the massive building, which headquartered Earth's military force.

They knew that Derek, Nova, Wendy, and Homer had gone to the media and gave their side of the story. Derek and Wendy explained what happened and asked for forgiveness, not only from their respective spouses but also from the people of Earth. The generals on the Council had thought it had made the quartet look weak, but they had underestimated the public's reaction to the widely viewed interview.

President Brandon Hamilton's baldhead gleamed from the light in the office as he entered the office. His dark skin clashed with the cream white of his uniform, having served under General Singleton during the five years of fire. "Gentlemen, it appears that we have a problem!" Hamilton rumbled with dissatisfaction.

"I agree, sir! Shall we call out the riot squad to disperse these protestors?" asked General Beauchamp.

Hamilton shook his head and said, "No. But I would like your resignations, as well as the rest of the EDF Council, within the hour."

The three generals looked at each other, stunned at this development. They had assumed that the president had been on their side, but they had been wrong. "Sir, you can't just let Wildstar get away with this!" screamed Fielding.

"Of course I can! They are the Star Force, and they're far more heroic than any of the lot of you on the Council!" Hamilton countered, dismissing Fielding like an impudent school child.

"This isn't proper, sir! You'll have a mutiny on your hands if you go through with this!" Albion warned in his Texas twang.

"You think I came here without a few aces up my sleeve?" Hamilton pulled out a piece of paper and laid it on Beauchamp's desk. It was a list of names of generals to be considered for revised Defense Council. "They all are personally loyal to me, as well as Generals Singleton and Glitchman, and they have the support of over three-quarters of the general staff!"

The three men could see that the president had just put them in checkmate. "And if you even think of trying to ventilate me, gentlemen, I'll personally sign your death warrants in front of you and watch as the soldiers pump you full of bullets! Do I make myself crystal clear?"

The three mumbled "yes sir", and Hamilton commanded them to clean out their desks. The president proceeded to find the other members of the council and give them the same bit of bad news, with the same threat of execution if they were to try to counter this.

When he returned to his presidential suite, Major General Charles Singleton and Brigadier General Douglas Stone sat in front of his desk, waiting for his return. "Well, they were less than happy at what I had to say!" Hamilton said with an ironic smile as he sat down in his chair on the opposite side of the desk from Singleton and Stone.

Stone replied, "It had to be done, Brad. People have been getting restless with this whole situation ever since it broke, and the last thing we needed was a revolution on our hands!"

"Well, they're getting one anyway!" Hamilton said.

“What?” Stone asked, stunned at the news, but Singleton only nodded and added, “The people have been without a civilian government for over twenty years now, ever since the Gamilons began their war against us. Granted, we’re far from the kinds of military dictatorships that were seen in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, but still, like my father always said, the people have an instinctive right to have a voice in their own fates!”

“This couldn’t come at a more convenient time for us, though. We’ve been wanting to enact this, but we knew that as long as the triumvirate led the EDF Council, we would never be able to get this accomplished.” Hamilton said.

Stone reluctantly agreed and conceded, “It will take some time to bring civilian leadership into the fold, but, if we do this right and don’t rush things, we can make the transition smooth.”

EDS Yamato, orbiting Phoenix Station
September 29, 2214

Nova sat beside Derek on their bed, not knowing what to say. Her true love had betrayed her, yet she knew deep down that it ached him to have erred so greatly. The rest of the crew had looked at him in disbelief, and he had a hard time looking back at them without melting from their “say it isn’t so, Derek” expressions.

Nova’s grandmother had taught her about forgiveness when she was a young child. Her older sister, Gally (short for Gabrielle), had broken one of Nova’s favorite dolls, and Nova had refused to talk to her older sister for days on end because of it. Not even the scolding of her parents could get her to forgive Gally, even after she had apologized for what she had done.

But her granny had told her about an incident where one of her best friends in high school had unknowingly stolen the affection of a boy that she had pursued, who turned out to be a user in the end. She could have easily abandoned their friendship, she had told young Nova, but I forgave her because she was my friend, and because she admitted that she had made a mistake, even unknowingly.

Forgiving Derek was the hardest thing she had ever done, but she knew she had to do it. Forgiving Wendy was just as hard, but she knew she had to do that if she was ever to find peace.

“Are you going to say anything?” Derek sheepishly asked.

“I...I tried to kill myself, Derek.” Nova began to sob. Derek embraced her, and Nova, for a moment, almost brushed him aside, but allowed him to hold her despite her reservations. “I was weak and forgot about how important I am to my daughter back home.”

Derek began to cry as well, ashamed at what had happened. Homer had forgiven him and had made every effort to mend fences with him, which amazed Derek, because he had always figured that once Homer found out (and Derek admitted to himself after it had happened that Nova and Homer would find out eventually), he would knock him on his ass. “I’m so sorry, Nova! I’m so very, very sorry!”

Later that day, Derek was working out alone in the gym aboard the ship. He had just finished doing some curls when someone tapped him on the shoulder. As he turned to look to see who it was, a fist made hard contact with his jaw, knocking him to the floor.

He got onto his back to see who had punched him, expecting to see Homer standing there, finally giving him his just due. Instead, it was Starbuck who stood over him. "How could you?" she growled at him. "How could you do that to her?"

Derek had no answer for her as he got to his feet, only to be knocked back down onto his ass by a right uppercut from Starbuck. "Answer me, you son of a bitch! How could you do that to her?" Starbuck said in an angry whisper, which tore into Derek more than her loudest scream ever could.

"I...I made a mistake. I..." Derek said as he got back to his feet again, only to be staggered by another roundhouse by Starbuck. This one had lost some steam, though, and it only staggered him. He looked at her and shouted at her, "Hit me! Hit me again! I deserve it!"

Starbuck was shocked at what he said, and stepped back at Derek's verbal counterattack. "Go on! Knock me on my ass! I deserve it! I deserve it for disobeying a direct order from Captain Avatar, to make Nova happy! I deserve it for letting down the two women in my life that I would give my life for! I deserve it for letting down my daughter back home!" Tears ran streaming down Derek's eyes as he awaited another punch from the young Colonial officer.

Starbuck sat down on a nearby bench, stunned at Derek's reaction. She had come in there looking for a fight, but he wasn't giving her one. Suddenly she began to become racked with tears, and Derek asked her what was wrong.

"I made the same damn mistake, Derek! I...I tried to cheat on my own husband...with Lee Adama! I let my own damn misplaced affections get the best of me!" Derek sat down next to her and stayed quiet as she spilled her guts to the man who she had wanted to thrash just moments earlier. "I...used to want to be with Lee. He was so much like his brother Zak, whom I was engaged to before he died. I...I just couldn't bring myself to admit that I loved him."

Starbuck sniffled as her tears continued to run down her face. "Then I met Sam, and fell for him on Caprica when I went back for the Arrow of Apollo. I had to leave him there to come back to Galactica, and I met up with Lee again. I was so conflicted. I wanted to be with Lee, but I was in love with a man who I had thought was dead, even though I had promised to go back for him and the rest of his team."

Nova walked in just then and noticed the bruises on Derek's face. "What happened?" she asked.

Starbuck couldn't face her, so she looked forward and just said, "I kind of got out of line. Sorry about that!" She wiped the tears from her eyes and walked out of the gym, leaving Derek and Nova alone.

"Don't say anything about this, Nova. She didn't do anything that I didn't deserve!" Derek grabbed a towel and wiped his face, then put his arm around his wife and headed back to their quarters.

Aboard Pegasus, orbiting Phoenix Station
Inside Commander Lee Adama's Quarters
October 1, 2214

Admiral Adama had decided to make it a practice to alternate daily briefings with the commanders of Galactica, Pegasus, and Yamato, mainly to give him an excuse to see his son more often, but also to see the interior of Wildstar's ship. Today, though, he sat inside the

command quarters of his son's ship, which was much more advanced than the rust bucket he commanded. But, as he had seen with Yamato, rust buckets tended to be just as tough as the shiny new ships fresh onto the line.

President Roslin and Vice President Zarek sat on one couch, opposite from Admiral Adama and his XO, Colonel Tigh. Lee Adama's new XO, Captain Karl "Helo" Agathon, as well as Lee's wife, Dee Adama, sat on the couch opposite from the one across from Derek Wildstar, Captain Nova Forrester-Wildstar, General Wendy Glitchman, and Kara "Starbuck" Thrace. Dee was staring daggers at Starbuck, not in the least comfortable with her presence.

"Okay, what's the latest concerning our move to Earth?" Roslin asked General Singleton. The Colonial president could tell that the tension in the room was thick as peanut butter, and she had to use all of her diplomatic skill to navigate through this minefield.

"The new Council had tentatively approved your emigration to Earth, pending a review of a committee to determine where it would be best to settle your people. My father has convinced the president to keep the Colonial Forces together as an independent unit under the joint command of himself, Admiral Adama, and yourself, Madam President. Galactica and Pegasus would still be kept in service, and upgraded with our latest technology." General Glitchman said.

"Good, but our flight bays would need extensive work to accommodate your Black Tigers and Cosmic Zeros. How would we be able to launch fighters without a massive overhaul?" asked Colonel Tigh.

"That won't be necessary, Colonel. The EDF Council has agreed to build new Mark VI Vipers that are compatible with your launch tubes. Sandor has informed me that we can successfully adapt the current design for Cosmic Zeros to the Viper prototypes." Wildstar replied.

The meeting was a somewhat dull affair, but there was plenty of good news to help lighten the mood somewhat. But the meeting was about to turn heavy when Dee blurted out, "If I may, I would appreciate it if Starbuck would stay on Yamato whenever we have our daily briefings here." Dee's catty remark got her an icy glare from Starbuck, who was not amused at what had just been said.

"Starbuck is obligated to be here, since she is the liaison officer." Admiral Adama said, seeking to quash Dee's objections.

Nova could tell where the meeting was going, so she stood up and said, "Admiral, if you would, could you please take the vice president and the president back to your Raptor? We all need to have a talk."

Adama looked around to everyone in the room before replying, "Sure. Saul, if you would." Tigh nodded and followed Adama out. Before they got to the door, Adama asked, "Would you like me to send up your husband, General? Perhaps Anders?"

Wendy only nodded, saying, "If you wouldn't mind, Admiral." Adama nodded and waited for the president and vice president to pass before following them out. As they made their way down the hall, Roslin commented, "Things are about to get quite thick in there, Admiral."

Adama replied, "If it's all the same to you, I'd rather watch a battle with the Cylons than watch what's about to take place in that room. It's going to get ugly in there. I just hope that it doesn't end ugly."

Everyone waited until Homer and Anders got into Lee Adama's quarters before getting started. "Wendy, what's up?" Homer asked, then looked around the room and nodded. "

"Homer, sit down, please. We all need to talk, but we'll wait until Sam Anders arrives." Nova said, then heard the beep of the door chime. "Come!" Nova said, a beat before Lee could.

Sam Anders came in and looked around. "Oh." He looked like he wanted to retreat, but Nova stopped him by saying, "Sam, come in please. We all need to have a talk." He nodded and sat beside his wife Kara.

Nova sat back down beside her husband and asked Kara, "Okay, Kara, how did this all happen?"

Kara told the story of the party after the groundbreaking of the New Caprica city hall, and how she and Lee had went into the forest, both a bit tipsy from drinking too much. With tears in her eyes, she told of how they had made love that night, and how they had screamed each other's names into the night.

"So, then, why'd you marry me?" Anders said without any heat, but clearly uncomfortable with what was going on.

"I don't know, Sam. That's the thing. I love you, but I love him too." Kara looked at Lee when she said this, and Lee looked back at her.

Dee asked, "I could ask the same question, Lee. Why did you marry me?"

Lee said, "To get back at Kara." It visibly pained Lee to admit as much, but he added, "I don't regret it. I do love you, Dee. It's just...I should have waited."

Sam asked Kara, "So what's to become of us?"

Kara replied, "I need some time to think about this, Sam. I'm a frakked up mess. Maybe some time away from all of you would help me get some clarity about things." She shrugged, unsure of whether or not she would get that clarity no matter how long she stayed aboard Yamato.

It was an uneasy meeting, but there was no yelling. Yet the emotions were intense, and the issues remained unresolved, but as Nova left the meeting room with Kara, she thought that the future would see some resolution. Derek stayed behind to take a tour of Pegasus and spend some time with Lee. Sam and Kara agreed to some time apart and Sam would move back to Galactica briefly until the admiral and he could decide what to do from there. Dee decided to stay with Lee for the time being, but it was clear that they had plenty to work out if they were to stay married.

Back aboard Yamato, Kara Thrace spent some time training on a Cosmic Zero fighter. From the bridge of the ship, Nova listened in as the squad conducted training maneuvers to help bring their liaison officer up to speed with the new fighter.

Wendy came onto the bridge and sat beside her friend. "She seems to be adapting well to our fighters."

Nova nodded and said, "She's a natural fighter pilot, just like Derek and Pete Conroy."

Wendy asked her friend, "Are you okay?"

Nova turned to Wendy, knowing what she meant. "I think so. I...I wish that I knew that you and Derek were having trouble with our absence."

"I had been thinking of mustering out of active duty after that tour, but I just felt a sense of obligation to serve. We're so short of good officers at the moment." Nova replied.

"I'm sorry it happened, Nova." Wendy apologized again.

"I always suspected you had a crush on him, even back before the mission to Iscandar. Can't say that I blame you!" Nova said with a chuckle.

Wendy smiled and said, "Yeah, you're right. I had wanted to go on that mission so badly that I didn't speak to my father for weeks after he denied my request to go. Partly because of Derek, partly because of Mark." At the mention of Mark, Nova felt a shudder of a sob go through her, which Wendy noticed.

When she asked about it, Nova admitted, "During that mission, I had my own issues, sort of like Kara has with Sam and Lee. I knew that both Mark and Derek were interested in me back then, and I had a hard time deciding whom I wanted to get involved with. It wasn't until we got to Iscandar that I made my decision to be with Derek."

Flashback
Fifteen years ago
Queentown, Iscandar

Mark Venture was the pilot of the Yamato, and was also Derek Wildstar's best friend. He was also someone that Nova had come to regard as a friend, but only as a friend. During the voyage here, she had considered being with the both of them at one time or another, but, as time wore on and as they got closer to the world in which Queen Starsha ruled by her lonesome, she began to draw closer and closer to Derek.

Mark needed to know, Nova thought, so it was time that she told him so that he could move on. She arranged to meet him near the ocean while Derek spent time with his brother Alex, who had miraculously been found here, having been rescued by Starsha when the prison ship taking him to Gamilon crashed on Iscandar, leaving him as the sole survivor.

"I know how you feel about me, Mark, and I appreciate it, but I just find myself more attracted to Derek. I hope you understand." Nova said.

Mark nodded and replied, "I do. I had suspected that you two were gravitating towards one another. I had just hoped that I was wrong."

Back on Yamato

Nova worked out in the gym, but couldn't get her mind off Mark Venture. They had managed to remain friends afterwards, but there always seemed to be a distance between them. She couldn't ask him now, of course, because Mark had died of a gunshot wound he had received as the Yamato valiantly tried to prevent the Dilguil cityship from warping the water world of Aquarius one last time to Earth. He had somehow managed to get back to the bridge, and used his remaining strength to pilot the ship off the self-destructing megalith.

She remembered watching him die, after he had put her hand in Derek's and made him promise to make her happy. It was healing in one way and painful in another, because Nova had hoped to one day see Mark walk down the aisle with some lucky woman.

Jordie Venture, Mark's younger brother, finished his workout and nodded at Nova before leaving. As he made his way out of the ship's gym, he moved aside to let Starbuck come in. "Captain, I just wanted to let you know that I had finished my training."

"Good. How do you think it went?" Nova asked as she did a leg press.

"The Zeroes are about the same as the Vipers when it comes to handling, which is good. The speed took a little getting used to, but I managed well enough." Starbuck said as she walked over to the bench press that Nova had just lie down on and began to spot her friend.

"I did well enough on them when I was checked out on them, but I knew that I would never cut it as a fighter pilot. Derek said I had a lot of the instincts, but I just didn't have enough skills to be effective. He was kinder in his evaluation than I was. Point was, I sucked." Nova said as she began her rep.

"Yeah, that was something I should have told Zak years ago. I'm glad Derek had enough sense to tell you that you couldn't cut it." Starbuck replied.

"There is a difference, though. I realized that I wasn't a good enough pilot to fly Cosmic Zeroes. Zak couldn't come to that conclusion because he was trying too hard to impress his father. I know how he feels, because I was always trying to impress my own demanding father." Nova finished her reps and spotted Kara as they changed places on the bench press.

After the workout they went their separate ways, and Starbuck went to the mess hall for chow. From the looks that she got from the crew, scuttlebutt about the fight with Derek Wildstar had already made its way through the grapevine. No one directly confronted her about it, but there was a pointed silence as she made her way through the line.

She didn't pay it much attention as she sat down at an available table, alone. She nodded as she observed that Yamato's chow was better than the stuff she got on Galactica. Of course, the battlestar could only rely on the rag-tag civilian fleet to grow the food needed for the entire Colonial population.

Roughly five minutes after she sat down to eat, Derek Wildstar came into the mess. Starbuck looked up at him and they locked eyes briefly before he turned and got in line. The buzz that arose from the room was in expectation of a scene, but Starbuck was too tired to give them one.

Sure enough, Derek came over and sat across from her. "Where's Nova?" Starbuck asked.

"On the bridge. She's speaking with the new council about the last details on moving your people to Earth. We should be able to get underway within the next few hours. I have to go back to Colonial One to meet with President Roslin and Admiral Adama." Derek replied.

Starbuck nodded, then pointedly asked, "Why did you sit down here?"

"To tell you that you were right and I was wrong, and to thank you for preventing Nova from taking her life." Derek said.

Starbuck looked at him with a surprised look on her face. "She told you?"

Derek nodded and said, "That's why I deserved getting my ass kicked by you in the gym. In many ways, Nova and you have a lot in common."

Starbuck shook her head and said, "No, I don't think so. She's much more confident and much more at peace than I'll ever be."

"If you only knew." Derek said with a grunt. "You'll begin to see as you get to know her better. It's obvious to everyone that you think highly of one another."

"That's true. I didn't think much of her when I first met her, because of her looks. I thought she was one of those fragile women who couldn't stand up to fire. She proved me wrong on New Caprica." Starbuck conceded.

"She wasn't always that way. But going through the five years of fire did forge her into what she is today. That and the pressure she got from her parents to succeed."

Starbuck asked, "Is it true that you brought some kind of machine to Earth and cleansed it of massive radiation?"

Derek nodded and replied, "Yeah. We lost a lot of good people in bringing the Cosmo DNA home, but it worked."

"Cosmo DNA? That's kind of a weird name!" Starbuck said with a startled laugh.

"Well, that's what Queen Starsha called it. I didn't care what it was called, so long as it worked."

"You do have a point." Starbuck conceded as she finished off the last of her grub. She had no idea what chicken cacciatore was, but at least it was somewhat tasty and did its job of filling her belly. "Do you think it could be used on one of the Colonial worlds?"

Derek thought for a moment, then said, "I'm not sure. We still have it back on Earth. We'd have to bring it back aboard and reassemble it, but that should be no problem."

Just then, the intercom beeped and an announcement came over it. "Wildstar to the bridge! Wildstar to the bridge!"

Derek wiped his mouth with his napkin before getting up from the table. "Gotta go. Nice talking to you, Starbuck!"

Starbuck replied, "Thanks, sir!" As she watched him leave, she shook her head and wondered how she could go from wanting to knock his head off to having a civilized discussion in such a short period of time. She still was angry with him for what he did, but it was now only a simmer.

Aboard Colonial One
Presidential Meeting Room
October 2, 2214

Just before she was to meet with Wildstar and the Adamas, Doctor Cottle came to see her to give her the latest on her cancer. "It's slower this time, but unless they have some better ways of treating it on Earth...I'm sorry, Laura." Cottle said, dropping his normally gruff exterior.

Laura nodded and said, "So the Cylon blood wasn't a cure after all? Just a stop gap?"

Cottle shrugged. "That's about it. From your blood work, it seems like your natural blood cells overtook the Cylon ones we infused you with a year and a half ago. I do not know if simply giving you a transfusion from Athena will work or not..."

"I still can't believe he allowed her to rejoin the crew!" Laura said, then apologized for interrupting the doctor.

"It may work, but it's doubtful. Besides, it's probably better to wait until we get to Earth and see what kind of treatments they have there." Cottle said.

"What about Dr. Sane? Do you think he could be of some help?" Laura asked as Cottle got up to leave.

"If you could pry him away from the bottle long enough." Cottle said, using the universal gesture of someone imbibing alcohol.

"We all have our vices, doctor, like with your smoking." Laura replied.

"Maybe, but smoking doesn't dull your senses like alcohol does." Cottle made his exit, nodding to Tory Foster, the Adamas, and Derek Wildstar as they entered the room.

Cottle motioned for Laura to come over to a corner, then he added, "He may be a drunk, but I've heard from members of their crew that he's damn good at what he does. Maybe he could be of some use, or at least know of someone on Earth that could help."

Laura nodded and then went over to greet the guests and start the meeting. In her mind, though, she was curious as to whether or not an Earth doctor could be of some help. It was a long shot, but considering how far they had all come, another miracle wasn't quite out of the question.

Aboard a Cylon basestar
October 3, 2214

Gaius Baltar did not know how much longer he would live. As someone whose base instinct was self-preservation, this was a very unwelcome feeling. He had been left alone for the most part, with the exception of Caprica Six and the Cylon formerly known as D'anna Biers.

They had finally given him some clothes after asking Caprica Six to intervene on his behalf. It seemed that she was the only ally he had on this ship, as the others were either indifferent to him or somewhat hostile towards him. As he lay upon the bed they had given him, he wondered why he was still alive.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. He had no idea he was being used by the Cylons to betray his own people. The old Caprica Six had seduced him into giving her access to the defense mainframe, and it was only when it was too late that he realized that he had given the lethal enemies of the Colonies the very key to wipe them out.

The Six in his head had not been around for a couple of days (or at he thought it was a couple of days, as he had no idea what time it was), and he wondered why that was. Was she jealous of Caprica Six?

He didn't have any more time to contemplate that as D'anna came in with a harried look on her face. "Gaius, come with me. We need you!" she said, and Gaius didn't hesitate to follow her. He didn't bother her with questions as they made their way up one hallway and down another, because he had no idea if she wanted to keep him alive or get rid of him.

D'anna had led him into a room that looked like a central command center of some kind. It reminded him a bit of the CIC aboard Galactica, except that some of the Cylons had their hands in trays with water, or what looked like water.

"We've picked up some radio transmissions from the Colonials. It appears that they are headed to Earth." Gaius looked at Boomer as she said this and wondered what she was thinking about this discovery.

"Do we have any idea where they are at the moment?" Cavil asked.

"Yes. We've traced the signal to a point just two jumps from here. We could be there shortly and jump on them right before they leave." One of the Simons replied as he looked around at those at this particular data port.

Before Gaius could say anything, Boomer added, "Too late! They've just jumped!"

"Damn! So much for giving them a nuclear surprise party!" Cavil added as he took his hands from the port.

"We can't just jump in and expect to wipe them out easily. It was hard enough when it was just Galactica and Pegasus, but with those Earth ships, it would be even harder." Leoben said.

"You, my friend, do not have an appreciation for the element of surprise." Cavil added. Moments later, the Cylons got a surprise of their own as their ship was rocked by an explosion.

D'anna hadn't put her hands in the port yet, but after she picked herself off the floor, she plunged her hands into the water to try and find out what had happened. "We're under attack, and it's not the Earth ships!"

Another explosion shook the ship violently, knocking Gaius and several of the humanoid Cylons to the floor. Even the Centurions shook with the energy of the blast, but they somehow managed to stay upright.

"We have to get out of here!" Caprica Six said urgently, and D'anna nodded. She looked around the room and the rest of them silently agreed.

"Tell the hybrid to jump the ships!" D'anna said. Moments later, all five basestars jumped from their location to their next rendezvous point.

From his seat on the bridge, Gamilon General Dommel Lysis laughed as the last of the basestars winked out of sight. "Pity that they do not have the stomach for a fight!" said the dark haired, blue skinned commander

Colonel Geru Volgar nodded and added, "Those are not Earth ships, General! Wonder who they could be?"

“It is no matter! We know where the Earthers are, and we know that that fool Deslok will come to their aid! I knew I should have deposed him when he turned his back on me after what happened at Balan!”

This brought Volgar up short. “You can’t be serious! No one has ever attempted to depose him!”

Lysis laughed the mere thought of failure off as he turned to look at someone entering the room. “Little does he know that one of his own flesh and blood has already turned against him!”

Medusa was Deslok’s second eldest daughter, and she, as Lysis knew all too well, resented her father’s grooming of her older sister to take over the reins of power. She hated Desmonda for having the gall to be born ahead of her, and the price she paid for failing to kill her was to be cast off of Gamilon by her father.

“When do we go after that fool of a father of mine, my dear general?” Medusa said with relish.

“Soon! I want them all to be at Earth when we strike! Then we can wipe them all out at our leisure. I want to see Deslok’s face as he watches me wipe out the human race once and for all!” Lysis’ menacing laugh echoed off the walls of the bridge, and brought an evil smile from his lover Medusa.

Little did he know the Maddarens were slowly making their way towards Earth as well. Within a matter of days, these elements would meet together above Earth, and the resulting battle would forever change the Milky Way Galaxy.

Back on Kobol, the being inside the Temple of Athena watched all of this as if it were a movie. She knew what was coming and she knew what she had to do. The time had come to strengthen the visions she had sent to those aboard the Earth and Colonial ships. She closed her eyes and focused her mind on finding the right people to connect with. She knew that she had to expand beyond those she had already contacted, because she had to get them to believe in what was to come.

She looked into the basestar of one of the Cylons and noted that one of them was asleep and having strange dreams. This made her curious, so she entered the mind of this humanoid machine. What she found there surprised her, and she decided right then to focus on this one Cylon and use her to bring together the two warring sides to fight against an enemy that made them all look like primitives.