

Chapter 2

When left to wake up undisturbed, Laura Roslin's thoughts ran in a predictable pattern. *I am the President of the Colonies*, sounded so nice when she was a young rising politician. But now it immediately lead to *my first official act was to abandon over half of the human race to the Cylons and run away*. Of course, the alternative was all of the human race being killed, but that did not assuage the guilt.

The final thought was *I'm dying*.

The only good thing about being left to wake up undisturbed was that the alternative was invariably much worse.

Today was an ordinary day, at least by post-attack standards. When Roslin walked into her office, Billy was standing at the whiteboard, changing the number that was always there to 47,852. "One suicide last night, Madam President, one death from old age, and a birth." Suicides weren't to common, thank the Lords, but they happened. Given the situation, she was surprised that there weren't more. The spiritual lift provided by the discovery of the path to Earth fading as the reality of the long journey continued. Moments of stark terror when a Cylon raider showed up didn't help, either.

In many ways, the duties of the President were simple, just because there weren't many options. One duty, really. "Billy, contact the *Galactica* and put me in touch with Commander Adama."

"Adama here, Madam President." No video, of course. You'd think the Cylons were able to put a computer virus into his picture which would give him the mange.

"Commander. What is our status this morning?" The fleet kept Caprica time, of course. According to Starbuck and Helo, there were still some alive to observe the time on Caprica. *I didn't wipe out all of the human race*.

"All ships operational. Water supplies are down, we'll need to resupply shortly. Fortunately we're moving into a region of space with several G-type stars. Even if there's not a Kobol-class planet, there should be ample water on the moons of the gas giants. No Cylon contact within the last twenty-four hours."

"Thank you, Commander. Please keep me inform--"

"Adama Out"

Damn the man.

It was easier during the first war, thought Bill Adama. Didn't have politicians hovering over your every move, didn't have to report to them

each morning. Just go out and shoot Cylons.

Of course, it was never quite that easy. But now it was – difficult. In principle he supported the Government, and was under its command. In practice he controlled the only weapons in light-years. The only human weapons, anyway. And that meant he was responsible for the rag-tag fleet that was all that was left of Colonial Civilization, if not the human race.

Today that meant that he had to find water. So telescopes scoured the nearby systems, each looking for anything terrestrial. Unfortunate that so many gas giants had spiraled near to their suns. Those systems had undoubtedly once had rocky worlds, and with enough rocky worlds you inevitably found water.

Ahead was a nebula. Infrared said that it hid several stars, but without visual there was no way to determine if said stars had planets. So out went the Raptors, looking behind the veil.

“*Galactica*, Raptor Three. We’ve got something. G-3 star, gas giants in normal positions, looks like a rock or two in the right spot. We’re going to –

“Raptor Three, repeat. Your last message was cut off.” Dee Dualla was the perfect communications officer. She could keep all emotion out of her voice in any situation.

“*Galactica*, we’re picking up radio traffic from the system ahead.”

Saul Tigh, for once not looking too hung over, rose up from the plotting desk. “Code Red. All hands, Code Red. Possible enemy transmissions detected.”

Adama stepped up to Dualla’s station and took the microphone. “Raptor Three, Adama. What is the nature of the transmissions?”

“Sounds like – sounds like regular communications traffic, Sir. Digital, not analog. We can’t make it out. Doesn’t sound like Cylon coms. We’re ready to go investigate.”

“No. Return to the *Galactica*.” Adama turned to Tigh. “XO, find Starbuck and tell her to report to the flight deck. And have Chief Tyrol ready the *Blackbird*.”

Truth be known, Kara Thrace shouldn’t have been very good at card games. She just wasn’t that good at calculating the odds. However, swagger and bluff could often carry the day, or at least hold off the inevitable until you just happened to draw “Full Colors, Gentlemen. Read’em and weep.”

As she was gathering up her chips, the comm sounded. “Starbuck to the flight deck. Lieutenant Thrace to the flight deck.”

“Gotta go, boys.” And off she ran, stopping only at her locker to get into her flight suit.

On the deck, Tyrol was readying the *Blackbird*. Starbuck’s eyebrows shot up. The Fleet’s one and only stealth ship? Something’s going on here.

Lee Adama was on the phone, “Sir! We can’t just send her out there alone. She’ll need backup!” He listened a minute, gave a very cold “Yes, Sir,” and slammed the handset back into its cradle. He turned to Starbuck.

“There’s a nebula out there that’s hiding a Kobol class sun. Not to mention somebody who likes to talk with digital radios.”

“Cylon?”

“Raptor Three didn’t think so. But something’s out there, and Command wants to take a look. Without giving away our presence. Which means”

“Which means that I take the *Blackbird* and go snooping. I take it from your conversation that you don’t get to come along and play?”

“We’ll give you backup, but we’ll be on this side of the nebula. We’ll be closer than the *Galactica*, but if you get into trouble it’ll be a long time before we can get you out.”

“Then I’d better not get into any more trouble. At least, not more than usual.”