

## You Can Never Go Back

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# You Can Never Go Back

by [changethenarrative](#)

## Summary

Set pre-Galactica, before the Cylons destroyed the Colonies. This was written before "Razor" came out. A deeper look into Cain, Roslin, and Adama's motivations during the Pegasus and Resurrection Ship episodes.

## Notes

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Inspiration came in many forms: Jeanette Winterson's Sexing the Cherry and Joe Haldeman of The Forever War. Also, many thanks to ariestess and selenay\_x for the mere power of suggestion; I wouldn't have written anything pre-Galactica if it weren't for your prodding. This story is inspired, also in part, by aeonian and projectcyborg's story The Book of Ambition.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Home

Running away from home was much like growing a new shell, except that it was populated by women in trapezes who flew in houses without floors. It terrified her; but like a hot tumor, it would not fall off. She had lived like that for five years and returned limping under its weight. She plunged the memory in a bucket of cold water...if only for a time.

She crept from the house on the cliff, called by a father who kept the house and wrote history on the back-sides of his cohorts.

Her white legs dangled from trees' high places while her eyes flared out to the endless blue. The sea stared back into her fire-hair, ran its fingers through her roots. Salt grains formed at her arms and legs like the careful, gritty ideas in her head.

She was twenty-five and everything was oblivious to time.

A man looked up at her and his eyebrows crumpled inwards into a bush of white. His face was the outer shell of an oyster, crinkled by sea-time.

"I don't suppose I can convince you to come down from there," he said blithely. He followed her gaze to the ocean.

"No."

"Right." His face broke into a smile, his lips sealed in a secret.

"You can't hide what you've done from me," she said.

"No, I don't think I could." He slowly stepped away and his steps seemed like the loud stomps of a giant. The joke was evident in his eyes. "I cooked the sea bass despite your misgivings about having fish this evening..."

She climbed down, down into the world where she could feel her feet.

It was true, she wanted to taste the sweet flesh of the afternoon catch.

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The roar had been imperceptible at first; then it became a screaming wind that bit into the shingles of their house. Hot light streamed into the windows and onto the dinner table, flickering as it descended.

She had a fork over her plate when her father stood and wiped his mouth.

"They always drop in uninvited." It wasn't a complaint; it was a fact.

"I don't understand how you can work for the government."

"I don't understand how anybody could sit and be complacent after this war," he countered. His back was to her when he called, "There's a Raptor in the drive way. Care to help me haul it out?"

Laura said, secretly grinning, "I wouldn't mind."

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"I suggest you go down and meet him," the lieutenant said, flipping switches as the Raptor settled on grass that fled into the shadows of the Roslin summer house. Detron Bay shimmered behind it, lending the water an orange hue which made his space-farer-eyes ache.

His wing-man stared straight ahead, her hands in fists.

"Perhaps I shouldn't have allowed that to be a suggestion; it's an order," he said. "Or I'll have you scrubbing the deck when we get back."

With cold precision, his co-pilot unhooked her safety belt, straightened her dress uniform and stared menacingly at him with a pair of unerring, brown eyes. He doubted he would ever forget how it pierced through the haze and made the coldness in him freeze into a second winter.

"You know better than to threaten me, Husker."

"And you know better than to take it personally," Lieutenant Adama replied.

He heaved a sigh of relief when she finally made a move to step out of the Raptor, hoping that her transfer to a different battlestar would be in order sooner rather than later.

And it wasn't for him. It was for her.

She was serving on her first tour with the Battlestar *Atlantia*; she was already ripe with more than a hundred kills in her first run on the fringes of Cylon space. If it weren't for the common respect Bill commanded from everyone in the landing bay and the fact that Fleet Command had expressed bigger plans for her, she would have replaced him as CAG several months ago.

She knew this. There were at least two letters of commendation in her locker, one of them from the Caprica-Aerelon victory. On the top shelf of that locker were three black boxes. He had one himself, for bravery.

"I'll have you later at cards. Or triad," she said. "Remind me to win all your credits so you won't be able to afford shore leave."

"Ooooh. I'm trembling in my boots."

With a sudden, understated grin, she slapped his shoulder. "Frak you, Adama."

She was never keen on going planet-side; she could barely hide her aversion, seated –as she always was –at the front of the briefing room. She was even less thrilled that her CAG picked

her for a diplomatic stint to Detron Bay, ignoring Bill completely when he asked her to join the triad table.

Not that anyone was happy about that last night, after the briefing.

Having her for craps or cards or any other game, was an educating experience. Sharp wit, wicked humor, and a scalding intelligence usually shut most of the boys up but she never – no, not once –made you feel like you were less part of the group.

Taurons were like that. The tylum mines, one's ability to keep her humor in dark, cramped spaces: these shaped their sensibilities. Up until she was angry. Then everyone stayed away as she took it out on entire Cylon squadrons.

When the war ended two months ago, she seemed lost, uncomprehending. There were no targets on her hub, none of the live ammunition flaring in space. Bill was convinced that bringing her down to the outskirts of Caprica City would somehow remind her of what it was she was fighting for exactly.

Peace.

She approached the Raptor's exit and Bill hollered her call sign, "Huntress!" She stopped. "Enjoy the air. You won't get any of that for the next six months."

"Yes, sir." But her eyes told him she'd be doing otherwise.

Helena Cain was sixteen and time seemed to tick perceptibly whenever she was close.

---

Michael had no qualms about having his daughter around Colonial Fleet personnel. She enchanted naughty six-year-olds at the resettlement a few miles down town. Her undergraduate class at Caprica University found every excuse to ask for consultations during the summer break. Consultations that she gave, regardless.

After all, education in the capital had been on hold for nearly five years. An unkind spring five years ago found one hundred thirty-two students killed at the steps of Athena's Hall, right after another virus deleted the library systems and threatened to wreak havoc on written, Colonial history.

The past year had seen their apartment in Caprica City destroyed by a Cylon air raid; it was spent hiding in the suburbs, scrambling for passage to one of two battlestars in orbit. It didn't take long for everyone to realize that the virus was the initial tide of another Cylon insurrection, which they had all thought was a continent, a whole *planet* away.

The war ended eventually; experience was on humanity's side. The Cylons were pushed to the stars. In these listless months of rebirth, of rebuilding, Michael knew that Laura felt she was doing her part in restoring what once was.

Luckily, the house on Detron Bay had been spared. Michael, when he first saw it intact, burned incense to gods he hadn't believed in since his wife died. This time could possibly be

the last time he would have her at the summer house before she agreed to do consultations for the government.

He warmed to the fact that Laura seemed to enjoy this particular summer more than she had the rest.

"Try not to look *too* interested," Michael said, indicating the Raptor's passengers.

"Dad," Laura chided.

Michael knew that the military had always been an enigma to her, especially during her last few weeks as a senior in university, when the students and the faculty abhorred—in principle—the stifling, military presence during the first Cylon strikes on Caprica City.

He remembered the time she brought home a strapping, Viper captain who didn't know the finer points of Monclair's paintings or the fact that Monclair traveled to all the Colonies for his art. Michael remembered, much to his dismay, creating bereaved looks for Laura to see as he served dinner under the captain's bewildered, clueless gaze.

Inwardly squirming from the memory, Michael opened the door to the front lawn.

His radiant daughter walked barefoot on the thick grass of the front lawn, her arms across her chest. A person jumped from the Raptor's exit, brushing off dust from the uniform and slipping on a pair of sharp-looking sun-glasses.

Laura's smile disappeared and was replaced by a deepening frown.

The person in the uniform was visibly the youngest pilot they had seen with the ranking of lieutenant.

"Oh my," Michael said.

"They don't usually send very young and impressionable officers to the lions." By lions, Laura meant the Colonial Diplomatic Corps.

"If you didn't know," Michael said off-handedly, "they send the youngest ones to the Gorgon of War to be eaten alive."

"And they sent a teenager, so they could soften you up." The challenge was apparent and he couldn't keep a smile from tugging at his lips. Laura continued, "I didn't expect this." She grimaced. "I hate surprises."

Michael was thinking of something else entirely, harking back to the first, traumatic day she brought home a soldier to introduce to her parents. "You didn't look too displeased when that...that pilot person—oh, what's her face?—confessed her undying love."

"That's because it *wasn't* a surprise, Dad."

"Good point." His face broke into a grin, faltering only at the edges while he took a more serious note, "Promise me you'll behave."

"I always do. It's the admirals, captains and countless majors that don't."

The pilot eventually stopped in front of him, offering a hand to shake. The pips on her collar glistened in the fading light and the gold-threaded lines of her cuffs shimmered as she removed her eye-wear.

The lieutenant had shortly cropped hair, which stuck out in dark brown spikes. She stood a few inches shorter than Michael, her lips set in the grim way that people sent to their deaths do. She had intensely dark eyes that reminded him of the sea during a hurricane.

She had remarkable presence, pulling everything to her in a violent cohesion of thoughts. Untamed, she openly studied the two of them; a reckless, if almost rude scrutiny that would have left him self-conscious if he hadn't mingled with the worlds' most ruthless.

His eyes automatically went to her cuffs.

More than a hundred kills. She wasn't even over twenty and already, the girl was a war hero. Oh, belay that. Not a girl, a *woman*.

"Lieutenant Helena Cain," she introduced herself as she shook his hand.

"Michael Roslin of the Colonial Diplomatic Corp as you probably already know." He gestured to his daughter. Laura reached out, her clothes flowing about her like a plenary. "This is Laura, my daughter."

Lieutenant Cain took his daughter's hand and let go just as quickly. "Sir, we're here to escort you to Persephone Base near Tauron City."

"I wasn't called."

"No sir. But I have with me written orders from Admiral Arko Peleus." She produced the paper and gave it to him. "We are to escort you to Persephone immediately."

"But the war is over."

"The Tauron insurgents on the tylium mine *Stryx III* think otherwise." There was an almost imperceptible crack in the woman's voice.

He made a show of reading the document. "I don't suppose you're from Tauron, are you?"

She cleared her throat. "I am, sir."

"Ah." He smiled gently, before handing the paper to Laura, who read the entire document with a sweep of green eyes. Michael continued without stopping, "Then I'd like you to be my personal aide."

"Excuse me?" Lieutenant Cain asked, taken aback.

Laura looked like she had swallowed her tongue. The paper had fallen out of her hands and she stooped to the ground to pick it up.

"My military adviser, if you will," Michael clarified. "I'll have Peleus' permission first, of course. But that's pretty much written in stone now that I've decided it. I'll be away from my family, Lieutenant, for months at a time. I'd like to know that I have someone I can rely on."

Helena's eyes darted to where Laura stood with a more affable air.

Somewhere, on another Colony, a doting father was waiting for Helena Cain to return safely from her first tour of combat. He would pray to the gods that she was in the company of good men and women. He would wish that they would keep her alive for him. At least, that's what Michael would have wanted for his own daughter.

His heart suddenly and inexplicably constricted when he saw Laura give the Lieutenant an encouraging smile.

"I...it would be my pleasure, sir." Helena eased back into her coldness. "If Admiral Peleus orders it, I shall obey."

"Good!" Michael said, clapping his hands together. "That's that, then."

Laura loitered by her father's bed as Michael Roslin pulled his clothes from the closet and dumped them unceremoniously into a bag.

She didn't stop him.

This felt strangely like free-falling, not knowing where your limbs were or where up and down truly was.

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"You have the house," he was saying. "Well, you've always had the house. You won't need to move to the city 'til six months from now."

She could hear the pitter-patter of the two Colonial pilots at the foyer, drum-like. The Roslin house was built in such a way that a conversation held at the porch carried on to all the other rooms. It reminded her of just how similar it was to her father's business, that aspect of listening to every nuance in a negotiation.

There was a low, husky voice, talking about his 1000th landing while the one named Helena Cain tried desperately not to laugh out loud. Then 'Husker' mentioned something about being carried on Little Wind's shoulders. There was a snort and they both rankled the house with their snickering.

"It's strange..." She picked at the loose threads of the blanket, pulling it up to her chest as she brought her knees to her chin.

"What is?"

"That in some places in the system, we treat each other in much the same way we treat the Cylons."



Michael narrowed his eyes at her. "They aren't human, Laura. I doubt the Cylons have any notion of compassion towards our race. The Taurons are a different matter, entirely."

The uncertainty stayed with her, much like the feeling of free-fall. A constant river of air that brought her everywhere and also, nowhere: to reflexively see things from everybody's point of view and then, to lose hers completely.

She did not notice, but 'Husker' Adama and 'Huntress' Cain finally fell silent as the sun disappeared and the crickets began to call.

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Helena Cain stepped into the Raptor and tried hard to ignore Bill's idiotic grin. Bill had a way of milking rapport from his people in a very personal way and she grudgingly gave him a thumbs-up when she took her seat beside him.

"Well, that wasn't so bad," Bill said.

"No, but..." She gestured with her chin at the Roslin house. "That one's a wild card."

"What made you say that?"

"Roslin negotiated the *Mercury* uprising; he parried Red Nero's threats to use Caprican citizens as human shields. And this was nearly twenty years ago." Helena could hardly keep the amusement from her voice. "Then he practically went behind the Caprican Governments' back by carrying out an investigation; he proved that the Caprican President's claim about uranium manufacturing was a farce. Michael Roslin managed to have the government after him for simply calling a lie, a lie. The Taurons were nothing less than grateful."

"Not that the Colonial government has a choice at this point," Bill pointed out. "He's probably the only representative to Tauron who's still alive after the Oasis attacks."

"Well, that's true but that doesn't mean I have to like it."

"Glad to see you haven't turned into a drone, Lieutenant."

Michael Roslin emerged from his home. The lady that was his daughter waved half-heartedly while she moved a wisp of red hair from her view.

Helena felt a wrenching in her gut as memories of her own father flooded her thoughts.

She could hear the older Roslin grunt as he clambered into the Raptor and took his seat, saying, "Oh gods. Vacations never really do last, do they?"

"No sir, they don't."

There was a term for diplomats on the *Gideon* mines she grew up in. Hardheads, they were called, people who could barely wrap their collective consciousness around mine culture, who couldn't and wouldn't understand the mentality behind the numerous uprisings, even if it was their job to do so.

The war may have changed that, Helena thought, especially with the Articles of Colonization of only twelve years ago. The *Styx* operation was in the cusp of a new beginning and Michael Roslin had a propensity for nonconformity.

All of this, of course, happened during the long years of the Cylon uprising.

Mom died during the *Gideon* unrest and her father, a Colonial captain at the time, left the military and ran for office. Helena never recognized him after that; all the shady meetings with Colonial officials, with the Tauron-*ousodis* who didn't know anything about *politismos* and who sat at the Quorum of Twelve. And then there were under-the-table bargains with the rebels.

She could still remember the eventual withdrawal of the Battlestar *Ragnarok* after her father denounced the rebellion. It was a move that silenced all the *Gideon* mines; he had the most outspoken ones hung for treason.

Helena fled from *Gideon*, took the first shuttle to Tauron, to university. Then her brother died and she enlisted.

"Insurgents are probably the most interesting kind of civilian," Michael Roslin was saying to no one in particular. "And rebellions have been a staple in our times but I'm hardly glad to be bunking in a battlestar. Oh, joy."

The 'rebellion', Helena sneered inwardly. The *Gideon* unrest was hardly a rebellion. It was an encompassing product of *politismos*, a term that was synonymous to mine-culture and attitudes, a product of thousands of years of living separately from Tauron. *Politismos* was validated under statutes of autonomy that—at the pace these mines grew especially with the dawning of new technologies, language divergence, and the Articles—were hardly equipped to embrace the *politismos*' undercurrent of self-rule.

*Politismos* wasn't just an aspect of *Gideon* identity; it was their way of life, it *was* the mine.

"Chat the old man up," Bill told her as he powered up the Raptor.

She sighed. Now there was *Styx*, and Mr. Roslin was staring at her with curiosity as she sat beside him.

"Is there something you wanted to say?" he asked.

It may have come out too forceful, but she didn't care. "Just give it to them."

"Give what to whom?"

"Give the Styxians their freedom. Leave them to their *politismos*; don't ask them to change because they won't. Three mines, Mr. Roslin," she said pointedly, opting to look him in the eye. "That's nearly 1.5 million people on three asteroids. And this time, they don't have Colonial or Tauron-*ousodis* dogs in the mayoral seats."

"That's easier said than done, young lady," Michael replied, seemingly impressed with her knowledge. "They're hardly represented in the People's Council. I doubt anyone would

subvert an Article and grant them a separate colony-state, *especially* the Tauron-'ousodis' seated with the Twelve."

There was silence and Bill called out from up front, "Hey Huntress! Maybe you should leave the military and do something useful for a change."

"I *am* useful," Helena said. "I'm probably more useful than you are."

Michael's voice was quiet, non-confrontational "Maybe he means you shouldn't waste that head on flying." He added, suddenly smiling, "But Vipers are much too fun."

"And so, if I was interested in an education?"

"Then I'd be more than happy to help you out; but only if you help me." Michael winked. "Everything with a price, yes?"

Bill was laughing and Helena shut him up by saying, "Deal."

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TO BE CONTINUED...

# Epiphanies

The first letter, she recalled, was an immense shower of *fullness* that swept the day's weariness from the classroom.

*Dear Laura*, it began and she rolled her eyes. Her father was a hopeless romantic, but what made him truly special was his ability to mock himself.

*Dear Laura...or should I say, 'dearest' Laura?*

*No matter. These stupid letters are useless. I could probably just call you over the wireless but this is so much more fun, making life difficult by typing. I feel rather...classic, don't you?*

*I'm writing, quite obviously, from the Raptor and this Husker fellow has been spouting jokes like I'm not here. Pilot jargon is hard to follow but I imagine he and Lt. Cain are talking about a card game that involves vast amounts of personal belongings and even more self esteem. I doubt I can sit through it without unconsciously arranging my demise.*

*I've called Peleus about Helena Cain. She comes highly recommended and, no doubt, is the best candidate for an insider look on Tauron asteroid mines. Her father, apparently, is a mine leader on one of Tauron's tylium mines and a former Colonial captain.*

*She's got a temper, too. What more could I possibly ask for?*

*Michael Roslin*

*Consul*

*Colonial Diplomatic Corps*

*PS. Her credentials are monstrous. Absolutely monstrous. Fleet Command has been deliberating on whether or not Viper pilots could respect a sixteen-year old Captain. Husker certainly can.*

She smiled and wrote back:

*Dad,*

*I don't know if I should be happy or horrified to know that you'll be keeping company with card players but I suppose that now you're getting old, you'll need that youthful kick. As for Helena Cain, I honestly don't know what to think of her. She seems old and strangely inaccessible for someone so young. I'm not sure you can trust her.*

*Tell me more. I prefer hearing the news from you than the 'colored' versions on the wireless.*

*Laura Roslin*

*Assistant Professor*

Laura,

Atlantia is strangely comfortable for a huge hunk of metal. I've found out that everyone, including civilians, is welcome to play cards at the pilots' quarters. I've lost my watch while bonding with the crew, but I did acquire a rather aromatic coat from Husker's collection.

We arrived at Tauron yesterday morning and Atlantia's commander has left me with a military escort, commanded by no less than Helena Cain.

It's interesting that the mines here are held on an almost reverential note. Miners, in whatever form, are worshipped as Heroes. I recall a pantheon of gods down at the Tauron City. Vulcan was one of them.

We may have an uprising in our hands. There are close to twenty million miners and their families spread over a region of eleven parsecs. Only a few of these miners have family on Tauron itself. But the miner-worship persists, mainly due to the positive effect they've had on Tauron's colony for thousands of years.

These asteroid mines, considering that the Colonial government's defenses were sorely lacking towards the end of the war, took up arms (or already had arms) in order to defend themselves.

This is an interesting time, as the Articles of Colonization were drawn just a decade or so ago. The Styx operation may very well turn into a separatist movement and the Tauron local government refuses to concede full Styxian autonomy.

Doubtless, the miners have been done a great disservice by being left to themselves during the Cylon uprisings. The mines, in spite of and during the war, have been an enormous source of income and stability for the Colonials. But without the tylium from the Styx mines, we'll be crippling an eighth of our jump ability, commercially and in the military. Tauron itself will absorb the heaviest losses.

There are nasty rumors about nuclear war-heads hidden beneath the mines but we know how that particular thread of thought turns out.

Both sides are drawing terms, impossible ones I assume. I believe this may take the better part of a decade.

Michael Roslin

Consul

Colonial Diplomatic Corps

PS. They serve extraordinary steamed chicken at the kitchens. I was told I was lucky it was Friday when I went on board. They usually have rations all through the week.

---

*Dear Dad,*

*I've posed the question of Styx autonomy to my students. Most of my first year students have little or no compassion for the miners' ordeal. Insurgents are insurgents, they say. I'm trying to teach them the finer points of media bias. They've been receptive and I can perhaps change the tide of opinion next meeting.*

*The Tauron students raised an interesting debate and believe that the Styx mines deserve the following (yes, I took notes): the right to self-determination, territoriality, language and culture, financial autonomy, and police forces. Colony secession of this kind may push all the possibilities provided by the Articles of Colonization.*

*Styx and several other mining colonies have been mining since the Twelve Colonies arrived in this solar system, created their own sub-culture, built their own cities in these asteroids. My students are apprehensive; this may instigate a mine-wide call for political and even economic autonomy.*

*Funny, we may return to the age of colony-states soon enough.*

*What does Lt. Cain have to say about this?*

*Laura Roslin*

*Assistant Professor*

*University of Caprica City, Caprica*

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*Dear Laura,*

*Since you're so interested...Cain pulled a rabbit out of the hat. Her father is Gastor Cain, operations leader (and effectively the mayor) of Gideon I a few light years away. She has taken the initiative and convinced him to act on the behalf of the Colonial government in negotiations with Styx III, but she did this in a purely professional capacity. She dislikes the man.*

*Gastor Cain is also interested in the more flexible nature of the Articles' norms regulating the autonomous State.*

*Remarkable. I didn't know the girl had a knack for diplomacy or surprise. It inadvertently pulled the terms in our favor. Gastor has provided indispensable information about the mine's inner workings. Helena isn't pleased but she understands that Gastor's contributions can have bi-lateral implications.*

*I've been telling her about your teaching stint at university. For someone who has been flying Vipers, she's very well-learned. She can be talkative when drunk and she's been asking about scholarships in Colonial Planetary Policy. In effect, she's been asking a lot about the teachers there and about you.*

*I told her that you took after me, just to be safe.*

*I will convince her to write to you about any entry-level courses she can take. I don't think that a brilliant mind should be wasted on Vipers and endless reconnaissance at what is now being called the Armistice Line. She needs an outlet besides Husker, rogue Cylons, and the rest of the ruffians.*

*Michael Roslin*

*Consul*

*Colonial Diplomatic Corps*

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*Dad,*

*You like to rub shoulders with Husker and the rest, too. And don't you deny it.*

*My room sprung a leak yesterday. I'm moving to your room and messing the sheets. The handy-man is arriving this afternoon.*

*Are you flying Vipers now?*

*Love,*

*Laura*

---

*Laura,*

*Date the handy-man. Or I can set you up with Husker. I just hope they at least know Monclair's hefty contribution to art.*

*Vipers are efficient and deadly machines. I am in love with them.*

*Your rogue of a father;*

*Michael*

---

*Dad,*

*I'd sooner date the nearest Tauron.*

*Stay away from Monclair. He's a bad influence.*

*Love,*

*L.*

---

*L,*

*Is that what my teacher-daughter has been reduced to? A capital letter?*

*Speaking of Taurons, Helena Cain has been an unprecedented necessity in these negotiations; she is now my (unofficial) adviser.*

*Economic relations between the mines and Tauron itself are simply that: economics. There are little if no commonalities in culture and the politics are a permutation of Tauron governance (or lack thereof); some aspects of their culture can be downright heathenous.*

*Helena calls this politismos, and I've had my share of politismos and mine-identity in the Mercury conferences.*

*Helena's intelligence reminds me of you but her expedient views, especially her analysis of preventive warfare, are an interesting ballet of intelligence, political pragmatism, and a woman who has seen too much. I'm afraid you'll like her; rather, you'll be forced to because I'll be too busy the next few days and she'll be writing to you for me.*

*Yes, I've made her my personal aide in a most humiliating sense; I'll have her write long-winded letters to my daughter. I'm willing to bet you my socks that she'll abhor it but would rather jump out an airlock than disobey a direct order.*

*Dad*

*PS. Helena Cain knows Monclair, she hates Monclair. Apparently, the Monclair painting in Husker's possession has been a point of debate between those two. Thank the gods for cultured pilots! The handy-man be damned!*

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*Dad,*

*I've read about politismos and I won't pretend that I know everything about it. The mines created such a complicated identity that one couldn't cram it into books. You had to experience it for yourself.*

*Laura*

*PS. Your aide is underage. It's enough that my entire first-year class can't stop staring at my back-side. Stop teasing. Viper pilots are cocky, bull-headed little fraks. You are a slave driver. Spare her, please.*

---

*That didn't stop you during your senior year.*

*Love always,*

*Dad*

---

*Dad,*



*I'm going on a proper date tonight with one of the faculty because you've forced my hand.*

*Laura*

---

*Laura,*

*It must be the stagnant Battlestar air and the fact that Persephone Base is far away from a decent pub. Please do not date that ape Keisler. I will personally see to it that he doesn't get anything published if you do.*

*Send pictures. I want to see the look on his face when you tell him your father's Michael Roslin of Colonial fame.*

*Dad*

---

*Dad,*

*I told him. He didn't seem fazed.*

*The date didn't go too well last night; I'm off to school. You were right. Humanity would be better off if his papers weren't published.*

*Sending pictures now.*

*Laura*

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She did not get any messages after the last one so she kept her attention on the nightly reports over the wireless. There were three *Styx* asteroid mines and she concluded that her father was probably too busy with the negotiations for each. Protestors had already gathered at the gates of Persephone Base on Tauron. The *Styx* mine colonies themselves were uniting under a common leader.

She loved her father, perhaps a little too fiercely, but that could only be excused. Laura's mother died in his arms and it was the same day she had graduated and left home, installing her self at the new office the university had provided. Half-way through her very first lesson plan, fate dealt Laura a terrible hand and took it all away.

Her father had called her then, his voice strangely monotonous as Laura's hands trembled over the transceiver while she ran through the corridors of the university, drowning in the ululation of students who saw their own kin and faculty scattered and dead on the steps of the main hall.

Michael Roslin usually kept to himself during a crisis; war reminded both of them of what they had lost and it was usually during those times that they both kept silent.

So it was a surprise, three days later and deep into what was being dubbed the Persephone Accord, that she received a note under her father's heading.

*To Laura Roslin,*

*Your father asked me to write you the latest developments. These include the state of breakfast; we had scrambled eggs, tasteless sausages, and what looked like fried green tomatoes. Michael told me to tell you that he'd rather touch Lt. Husker than touch those.*

*He's currently in a closed door conference with several of the Styx's leaders. Negotiating disarmament has been a long and painful process, details of which none of us can share right now. The Styx Statute of Autonomy is currently being re-drawn although Michael warns that for the moment, even as the autonomous framework is underway, certain issues may still not be dealt with in the hope that they will be tackled later. The statutory text itself necessarily possesses vague precepts, which is deliberate because of the unclear Article-Statute relationship.*

*I'm told you're an assistant professor at the University of New Caprica. I was wondering if you can tell me more about a bachelor's degree in Colonial Planetary Policy.*

*He also insists that I disprove all your assumptions about Viper pilots; namely, that they are cocky and bull-headed. I'm not sure if I'm up to the task.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lt. Helena Cain*

*Battlestar Atlantia*

*Colonial Military Fleet*

*PS. He lost your pictures and his tie on the betting table. Please send new ones.*

---

*To Lt. Helena Cain,*

*I have new pictures attached to this message. Feel free to peruse them yourself.*

*Dad has a penchant for losing at games because he never, ever likes to lose on the negotiating table. On a more serious note, I'm surprised you would still like to learn planetary policy in university even as you're probably learning more than my students by being at my father's side.*

*Experience is the best teacher and Michael Roslin the Diplomat is an experience you won't likely forget.*

*Isn't my father at all concerned of the legal imprecision of the statutory text, if what you say is true?*

*Laura Roslin*

*Assistant Professor*

*University of Caprica City, Caprica*

*PS. I still insist that Viper pilots are cocky and bull-headed.*

---

The next letter left Laura a bit dazzled by the sixteen-year-old's eloquence and the fact that at so young an age, she had no qualms about addressing her matter-of-factly and as an equal.

It shouldn't have been a surprise, actually. Helena Cain worked with people who were five, even ten years older than she was. More experienced than some of them, she would likely be in command; she out-ranked even the deck chief and was second only to the CAG.

It was new to Laura, though. Teaching first-year undergraduate classes hardly prepared her for a literate, worldly Viper pilot below the legal age limit.

*Dear Laura Roslin,*

*The Gideon, Mercury, and Styx Statutes of Autonomy were the first approved by the Articles and necessarily lack a frame of reference or model of comparison. One must take into account the haste with which they were also drawn and made official, principally due to the need to resolve speedy political demands for autonomy.*

*Michael and the Colonial diplomats have been given half a year to work over the terms. He says that of course, he is concerned but he believes that the Statute's dynamic nature already has a clear potential for extension, especially for historical territories.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lt. Helena Cain*

*Battlestar Atlantia*

*Colonial Military Fleet*

---

*Dear Lt. Cain,*

*I assume the diplomatic corps has listed the statute's fundamental aspects, which will be changed?*

*And I truly am interested in knowing why you're interested in a university education, seeing as you have a bright military career ahead of you.*

*Laura Roslin*

---

*Dear Ms. Roslin,*

*I've attached the preliminary documents which include nationality, historical rights, territoriality, language and culture, material competencies, citizenship and economic*

*contracts.*

*I entered university when I was fourteen, before my brother came home from his first tour of combat. Leaving the Gideon mines, I took a few courses in political science. Call it a compulsion to irk my father. He was a bit disappointed, in much the same way he didn't like how I took after ravenous reading habits and my mother's unerring belief in the mine politismos.*

*I was hoping to play diplomat amidst the Tauron mine dilemma and the Colonial government when I was in university. This problem of 'insurgency' existed even before the Cylon war.*

*My father pulled me out of school when my brother died on his third tour and by the time the Gideon unrest ended, I was already serving aboard the Atlantia. I guess this is only to say that Viper pilots are the way they are for a reason. Cocky and bull-headed will probably keep you alive longer than the opposite qualities.*

*It's odd that I should share this but Michael swears by his writing tablet and says that writing to you in particular is therapeutic. I am sorry if I took an entire week to reply. I write flight rosters not letters and I'm hardly used to talking about myself to strangers.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lt. Helena Cain*

---

*Helena ,*

*Don't believe everything my father says. He's a diplomat and therefore, he's rigged.*

*How long have you been flying? It surprises me that you entered Colonial service at such a young age.*

*Laura Roslin*

*PS. Please tell Dad to eat his vegetables. He always neglects his diet off-planet. Threaten him on account of his teeth falling out.*

---

*Dear Ms. Roslin,*

*I hate my greens as much as he does. I'd be a hypocrite to insist.*

*As for your questions, I've been flying mine Raptors since I was eight and I've always been a talented pilot. My brother's death and the destruction of the mines at Delta Aris sealed my fate with the Fleet. We all suffered from the unrest and my father was very supportive of flight school. He was so eager to see me fly that I sometimes thought he wanted me dead. I was shipped in with Battlestar Ragnarok and then transferred to Atlantia shortly after.*

*How long have you been teaching? I hope I'm not being too forward. I've picked a few bad habits from the card tables and the Gideon mine wasn't much help, either.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lt. Helena Cain*

---

*Lt. Cain,*

*I graduated five years ago. I was teaching at Athena's Hall during the Massacre at the Steps and the near-nuclear strike on Oasis, when the virus wiped out the entire net. I lost my mother then.*

*Just curious but don't you ever get lonely out there in the black?*

*Laura*

---

*Dearest Laura,*

*It's your father, finally. I found Helena all silent and cold-like, and my compulsion to write you just overtook all my notions for laziness. She's a teenager in some ways and her angst is stifling me.*

*What in the gods' numerous names have you done? Well, not that I question your tact but... Did I never teach you anything?*

*This Accord is proving to be a head-ache. Pioneering colonial secession was never part of the plan.*

*Love always,*

*Dad*

---

*Dad,*

*Are you sure the problem's with me, not her? And humanity was born for change. Live with it.*

*L.*

It took days for the next reply to arrive, with a whole insert about how her father insisted on cooking for the entire diplomatic corps and how the Persephone Accord seemed to be moving in infinitesimal steps. It was obvious that Michael had prompted the response, mentioning Helena at random intervals until Helena herself wrote back:

*Dear Laura,*

*No. Flying's my life now and I've got my team.*

*There were too many things I left behind on Gideon I. Persephone Base is bearable because Michael makes everything look new and his writing tablet is a comfort.*

*Helena Cain*

---

*Helena ,*

*I'll tell you a secret.*

*I left home when I graduated. That was the same day the Massacre happened, and then the strike on Oasis. I thought I'd never enter the Halls of Athena again.*

*After the war, Dad took me back to Detron Bay and surprise of surprises: I'm teaching. I think that if you face your past head-on, things just fall into place.*

*Let me apologize for being forward. I hope I didn't offend.*

*Laura*

---

*Dear Laura,*

*The universe must be playing a big joke on me; I'm working closely with both your father and mine in this Accord.*

*Gastor has been a frequent fixture on my personal wireless these days, but he barely existed in my life during the Cylon war and even two years ago. It looks like negotiating peace through the Accord has afforded me my own retrospection.*

*Thanks for that bit of wisdom. Your secret is safe with me. And I took no offense. I look forward to our correspondence.*

*Helena*

---

*Hey,*

*I'm sending you an entire schedule for fall classes at Caprica University, and another set from the University of Tauron City. I got in touch with my contacts; they'd be thrilled to have you. War heroes aren't plenty in the learned halls of the academe.*

*Entrance exams will be in three months.*

*And that's what teachers are for: Wisdom. And may I mention Beauty?*

*Always,*

*Laura*

---

*To Laura,*

*I wouldn't contest your beauty. Or your wisdom. Your father talks very highly of you. I sometimes think he's an extraordinary story-teller of very tall tales.*

*Helena*

*PS. Thank you for the forms.*

---

*Helena ,*

*I'll help you with admissions and hopefully, the military will be willing to let you go.*

*I'd like to talk to you about wisdom and beauty when we next meet.*

*Can you please ask my dad how much longer he intends to stay? It's been nearly a month into the Accord and the wireless reported a cease-fire. Can you appraise me of the situation please?*

*Laura*

---

*To Laura Roslin,*

*I've neglected to update you. The negotiations recently halted for the Three Days of Rest in celebration of the winter solstice in Tauron; there will be a month-long ceasefire.*

*Michael has asked to 'borrow' me for two weeks days under the pretense of research. I'm now under orders from Fleet Command to personally oversee Michael Roslin's safety. (I think he's going to jump back to Caprica for a quick visit to the President.) The Statute of Autonomy will need more than a quick re-drawing. Michael insists that a bill will likely be authored and brought to the People's Council and effectively, to the Quorum of Twelve. It is going to be a long and bloody process.*

*He says to expect him and me for dinner tonight.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lt. Helena Cain*

*Battlestar Atlantia*

*Colonial Military Fleet*

Laura stared at the message just as another started blinking on her screen. *Tonight?* She slowly sank into her chair, her lesson review forgotten on her desk. Classes were to start in twenty minutes, at thirteen-hundred hours. Students were already roving the vast quadrangle in front of Athena's Hall.

The entire afternoon was hardly enough time to contemplate a visitor.

She opened the next message as she tried to shake off her uncertainty and the queasy feeling of being caught off-guard.

*Dearest Laura,*

*As Lt. Cain has probably informed you, I'll be arriving this evening. Let's just say that we, all three of us, will be together for the evening. I'll have a nice rest 'til the next day, and eventually meet the President for a private audience on the morrow. My only regret is that Gastor himself will be absent. Maybe it's for the better. He's very much unlike his daughter; Helena is probably more of the idealist at her age, more innocent.*

*Tell me you're excited. The girl's become somewhat like family already, don't you think?*

*The Taurons have been resolute and refuse to budge on no uncertain terms. I thought a vacation was in order before I jumped back into the fray. Helena and I could use your opinion; dinner with the winsome lady (that's you and hardly the lieutenant) would be a welcome reprieve.*

*It's so nice to have Arko Peleus for a friend. Pulling strings has never been so easy.*

*Michael Roslin*

*Consul*

*Colonial Diplomatic Corps*

The bell indicating the start of classes sprung to life, and she typed up a quick letter.

*Dear Dad,*

*I hate surprises and you will have to suffer the consequences. I have consultations until a little later this evening. Make yourselves at home; I was never good with food to begin with and I've been starved of your fish dishes. This will force you to cook sea bass.*

*I'm looking forward to an invigorating debate.*

*Laura*

---

The excuse was useless. She finished all her classes by four in the afternoon, opting to mill at the quadrangle while a Caprican student began a tirade on Styxian foolhardiness. He gathered a sizeable crowd. She could hardly stomach his words and left just as the sun began its slow descent into the horizon.

The shuttle took her to the foot of the cliff on which the Roslin summer house stood. She walked appreciatively up the gravel road, thinking about her arguments for when her father grilled her opinions. Then, belatedly, she remembered that this would probably be the best time to convince Helena Cain that the University of Caprica City was her best option.



She arrived at the front lawn, catching the eye of a figure seated comfortably on the divan at the porch. Lt. Cain had stripped down to her dark green and white tank, the dog tags shining as she moved to stand and leaned on the front door's frame. It didn't help that she struck an impressive figure as the bare skin on her shoulders and arms stretched with muscles, moving in languid motions of barely-hidden strength.

Her father emerged from inside the house, handing his guest a glass of what looked like lemonade. He waited for Laura with both hands on his hips.

Laura went up the steps and gave him a long, hard hug. "Am I glad to see you," she gushed. She beamed and dropped her bag on the floor.

"Well, you took long enough," he admonished.

From the corner of Laura's eye, she could see that the lieutenant had picked up the bag from the floor and looked embarrassed by them both. Helena was self-consciously sipping on her lemonade but this lasted only a few seconds because she opted to watch them with a blank expression instead.

When Laura broke free from her father's embrace, she noticed that her dad had stepped aside to give Laura some berth. Helena pushed against the door frame, only to stand properly in front of her.

"Hi," Helena said.

There was a strangely awkward moment as Laura smiled back and tried to think of what to do next.

"Oh, uh...well. Here." Laura reached towards her and pulled her into a loose hug. Helena stood limp in her embrace for a while before a decadently warm hand wound around Laura's waist and climbed up her back. "I didn't think I'd see you again under these circumstances," Laura said, a little more quietly.

"Likewise," Helena said.

They disentangled themselves from each other, unaware that Michael watched the entire exchange with amusement.

He led them all inside. "The sea bass is simmering," he informed Laura. "I filched some wine from the vineyards on the Tauron hills of Pullo. Lt. Cain, if you would kindly open a bottle while I truss up the young professor with our wrongdoings."

Helena excused herself and went hunting for the proper tools. The hallway to the open foyer was empty but for Michael and his daughter.

"So what's the game plan?" Laura asked her father.

He blew out through his lips. "Well, let's see. Caprica City tomorrow and probably the whole week. Then back to Tauron on my private Raptor with my personal pilot soon enough." He

really was mischievous, Laura thought; she couldn't leave him alone without him using the military for his own ends.

"I'm going to miss you when you do. Again."

Her father laughed. "She will, too. Miss you, that is."

"You're wicked, do you know that? Wicked. You don't know that."

He gave her a non-committal shrug. "Laura, Laura, Laura" he chided, before he heard Helena's voice from the kitchen.

"Michael, where do you keep your cork-screws?"

"Near the left drawer by the sink!" he shouted. Then pensively, his voice lowered and he told his daughter, "See now, if I were to lecture you on soldiers, *she's* the kind of girl you bring home to your parents. Not some half-witted Captain or an irksome professor who likes to hear himself speak. She's honest to herself, meant for great things." There was a very long pause. If it weren't for Michael's thoroughly serious look, she would have raised her eyebrow in question.

"I'm just a teacher, Dad."

Her father leavened the atmosphere with his wide smile, his warm eyes. "A teacher who will probably be a Fellow in two years. Believe me when I say...you just might be President someday." Michael nodded towards the direction of the kitchen, to the invisible figure that was now popping a wine bottle with her very capable hands. "And then she'll be an Admiral. It'll be a perfect match."

It was silliness, she was sure of it. "Be careful what you wish for," she said. "You never know; it just might come true and by then, the world would have turned inside out."

He put a finger on her cheek and the tenderness with which he said his next words made her certain that she could not possibly let him down, whatever it was she became.

"It just might," he said. "You'll see."

---

TO BE CONTINUED...

# Resurrection Ship

Many years into the future she still woke up sweating and clutching her breasts, this time thinking that it was the cancer. Then she remembered that the dull ache in her chest was something more cruel, more seditious and urgent like a time bomb ticking with the minutes strung out. No, it wasn't easy being President but...

When Elosha swore her in, she doubted she would ever question her father again. Or sleep quite as well.

When Elosha swore her in, she had Detron Bay framed in her mind, and she wept.

She didn't weep because she was overwhelmed by the idea of her office or because this tiny band of ships was the last of humanity. She wept because her father had led her to this moment, because the Styxians whispered into her ears with their countless ghost-voices, griping against the burden of time.

The ideal of *politismos*, which had overtaken her head for the better part of three decades, began to slowly, slowly let go.

Frankly, *politismos* was something she admired in Helena Cain.

Ah, Helena Cain. Always the Tauron and now, always the Colonial Admiral.

*"Admiral," Laura said. "I'm fairly burning with questions. I hope you don't mind if I just dive in."*

*Cain simply said, "Please."*

*"How did you find us?"* Wrong, wrong. How did you find *me*.

Laura swept a hand over her forehead, feeling the sweat there and then grunted as she stood from her make-shift bed. She looked at her watch, 3AM. The stars held fast in their backdrop of darkness and the other ships of the Fleet skulked in the windless vacuum, slowly following the *Galactica* on its perch.

Then there, just a bit to her left, was the *Pegasus*, a stream-lined hulk that spanned the entire space of her window. She put an outstretched palm on the glass, watching the back of her hand as it swathed the image of the battlestar.

"A penny for your thoughts?" Billy asked.

She sighed heavily, felt the age in her, felt the disease in her, and regretted the air which filled her lungs.

"Just the past, Billy."

"Care to elaborate, Ma'am?"

"You weren't the type who struck me as nosy," she teased. But that silenced him and Billy smiled shyly, blushing a bit before returning to work on his desk.

Now everyone thought she didn't sleep. It was her aide who created that illusion precisely because *he* barely did. Billy Keikeya left most of the slumbering to her and she smiled affectionately in his direction.

"We'll be docking in an hour," he continued, writing on and editing the presidential planner.

"Ah, yes. Bill knows I'm not too pleased about how events have turned out."

"It never occurred to me he'd grant command of the Fleet to her." Billy pursed his lips. "Dee isn't happy about how the Admiral handles personnel. There's been talk of mutiny, dissatisfaction."

"Mutiny," she tasted the word on her tongue, found it slightly sweeter than it had in the beginning, "will have to come from the Commander, if anyone."

---

"The Secretary of Education?" Cain cocked a brow in Roslin's direction just as she left. Cain scoffed. This was beginning to be very interesting, Helena thought, as she watched Bill Adama from the corner of her eye. He seemed resolute in his silence, more than aware of her admiralty, hesitant to talk about Laura Roslin simply because anything that would come out of his mouth would be to defend her.

It was another thing entirely to hear it anyway.

"She's come a long way," he said.

"I'm sure."

Husker looked at her long and hard, perhaps trying to deliberate on how quickly he had ceded his authority and remembering, just as firmly, the months of flying with her on the *Atlantia* all those years ago.

She could see it; the way his jaw hardened, how he turned to the flagon on his desk and started to pour ambrosia into a glass. She knew he would have given her his first-born had she asked for it, simply because they flew together, lived and died together. But that was many years ago and was hardly the case now.

The Monclair painting of the Caprica-Aerelon victory hung vividly on his wall and she indicated it with a finger.

"I thought you'd get rid of that thing," she said.

"No. I never did because you never liked it. I kept it just to spite you." A hint of a smile, then it was gone.

In some ways, she still felt like she was his wing-man and it was with the old comfort of their acquaintance that she received the glass of ambrosia graciously and raised it. Bill reminded

her of a world more civil, and also the dangers of civilization: education, revolution, freedom.

He had been her CAG; he should have stopped her at some point, disallowed her permission to go planet-side, helped her with her discharge and the Caprica University exams, or insisted that she was integral to squadron affairs and forgot school altogether.

There was no use going through the paces again, she bitterly thought, no use in scrutinizing where they had gone wrong, how they could have stopped it, why she wasn't there when Michael... No use, at all.

But the past had a way of rearing its head at the presence of all the right people.

"I never saw you again after the *Styx* incident," Bill said. "And I only saw you in passing during your promotion to the Admiralty."

"We never did see each other after that. All...three of us."

"I'm sorry about..." Michael. *Godsfrakkitt*.

"No, Bill. Don't." She downed the alcohol, cringing visibly as the liquid seared her throat. "The Incident, that's not something I like to talk about."

"Did you hear from Gastor again?" Bill ventured. She fought the urge to glare.

"Gastor died in the Cylon attacks on *Gideon*. The entire asteroid was nuked; I don't expect him to walk in on me any time soon."

"Well, you finally inherited his rougher edges." They stared at each other, neither of them knowing if Bill had said the right thing. He continued, "The *Pegasus* is a miracle. *You* walked in on *us*."

"I guess I have a knack for coming back from the dead. Or you do, with this rag-tag group of survivors." She stood up. "It's all relative anyway." Another swig of the glass, and then she thanked him for the drink, thinking all the while of raucous laughter with the *Atlantia* crew, card games she hardly lost, everything before the crap boiled over at *Styx* and scattered them to the wind.

Scattered and burned all her memories.

Forgetfulness helped her route the pain –the incredible, intolerable guilt –while carrying ruthlessly on. That she may do things more efficiently, without the burden of her emotions.

It had been so much simpler when she was sixteen.

She wanted to hang on to that slow purge of her regrets, while she tried to shut off the Michael Roslin who lectured endlessly in her brain. Lately, he had been talking to her more often when she saw the flash of auburn hair, the soft, non-judgmental gaze; images of the past and images of what-could-have-been burning themselves into her consciousness.

The Secretary of Education, who was now the President. It was a joke. Or a slap in the face.

Bill's voice was low, "She's done a good job of keeping things together."

"Bill..." The warning in her voice shut him up.

The gods taught her that her mother's dream of *politismos* was exactly that: a dream. Not an identity, not some heart-felt norm to keep family and community about her. She was Tauron now, utterly and completely. No frazzles. No frills. Just Tauron, like her father had been.

It had helped; after all, it wasn't easy to lug a ship full of officers who needed a hard push in the right direction and civilians who could barely clean after themselves, but the world ran clock-work under her command.

She willed it. No matter what. The Cylons be damned.

She paced towards the door, paused and said, "It gives me no pleasure to have to take command, Bill. I want you to know that."

"Don't give it a moment's thought, Admiral."

And she didn't.

---

She completely and utterly didn't.

Bill watched as she took –no *grabbed* –the reins and stoked the embers of what he was quickly recognizing was his anger. A slow burn that started at the bottom of a languid forest.

He had been grateful; oh by the gods, he just couldn't describe the feeling of seeing her again, of seeing that ship *Pegasus* again, of the cool relief it brought to him and the warmth it roused as she saluted him and told him, told everyone, "On behalf of the officers and the crew of the *Pegasus* it's a pleasure to see all of you. Welcome back to the Colonial fleet."

The last time he had seen her was during the ceremonies on Tauron for her promotion to the Admiralty, tall and proud and glistening with coldness. He hadn't thought that it had –in any way –inundated to every aspect of her.

He just could not imagine the same, dark eyes drilling a colder space into his gut but it did, and it angered him.

"I have a team that works very well together," he bit out. He was once again in her presence, trying very hard to keep it together.

Then it started. The ice shards from her mouth as she cut through his arguments, point by point. She mentioned his son. Insubordination. She talked about Kara. Disobedience. Then she lambasted Helo. Fraternizing.

He didn't know what else to say. "I thought you said you had no desire to interfere with my command."

"I'm saving your command, Bill. You're way too close to these officers, and it's blinding you to their weaknesses and to the damage that they're doing to unit cohesion and to morale."

"I don't agree."

A flicker of the Helena Cain in her Viper cockpit, then, "Well, that is certainly your right. You have your orders."

All he could think about was his ember at the bottom of the forest, of the way it climbed up the nearest tree and began tasting the trees beside it, and how Laura Roslin was not going to be pleased.

---

Laura stared out the window, silently contemplating on the mistakes which had led to that moment, when Cain and Adama's Vipers came roiling out into the vacuum and circled each other, glinting shapes that floated about like fish.

All for two men who tried to protect the Cylon prisoner on *Galactica*. For Chief Tyrol and Lieutenant Agathon.

The crew of the Colonial One crowded to that part of the cruiser with the best view while Laura stared out her own window, a hand on her chin and a blanket around her. She did not know what to feel, staring at both ships and thinking of the man and woman who commanded each.

It was not hard to imagine that Cain and Adama had both served on the *Atlantia*. What seemed harder to believe was that her father -Michael Roslin -had been an influence on both of them for the better part of a year. The thread that connected them all; that thick wire which had allowed her to grasp Helena's hand one night at Detron Bay. They looked out into the sea as she felt the young lieutenant's hands tighten around hers and the heat escalate to something unbearable.

Michael Roslin had moved the Accord beyond mere paper, pushed the President to action for the two weeks he was on Caprica, propelled the People's Council and pestered the Twelve.

There was reform, the bill was being authored –a separate, Styxian state –and instead of victory on the threshold of *Styx I*, he found himself sprawled on the steps of the *Styx I* landing platform, bleeding from a shot to his chest.

The first time he stepped onto the asteroid mine he spent a year fighting for, and he was dying from an assassination attempt.

The Accord pulled to a complete stop. The Styxians were incensed, the Taurons denied they had killed their own and the Quorum of Twelve pulled out a separate committee to investigate his death, most of them Capricans and Tauron-*ousodis*.

The mines were never the same again, even as the bill unraveled quickly and efficiently in the hands of the dominant parties. It never survived its first reading.

Helena Cain did not come home with the body, never attended Michael Roslin's funeral. Laura found herself blaming Helena for the sudden absences in her life. At the same time, she wanted to see her with a deliberate passion. But her father's death -and perhaps even Helena's youth -kept them apart for nearly three decades.

"Madame," she heard Billy say. "There have been developments." Lo and behold, Kara Thrace had dropped from FTL with recon pictures of the mysterious Ship.

The Vipers from both ships unraveled themselves from the fray, retreating to their havens. There was a whoop from her staff, Billy shook her before he remembered she was ill, and she was smiling in spite of herself.

It didn't take long before Billy told her she had a call from *Galactica*.

*"Cain and I stood down to condition two,"* Bill Adama told her over the wireless. *"And we're meeting there."*

"Neutral ground. I figured as much."

*"She'll be aboard the Colonial One ahead of me and I hope you find out what the frak happened to her all those years between now and the Accord because by the gods Laura, she's..."* Laura could hear him struggling for the right adjectives.

"The same Helena Cain I knew during the Persephone Accord, except with a bigger ship and the responsibility of human-kind on her shoulders." She sighed into the receiver. "She's a big girl, Bill. And she may have grown too big for the both of us."

The call terminated then. Laura waited silently for fifteen minutes before the tall figure of Helena Cain took the seat to her left and looked at her with the lattices of memory over her eyes.

"So we meet again," Cain said. "Where's Bill?"

"He told me to wait for another twenty minutes. Told me we had to talk."

The lattice rippled. "That's going to be a futile exercise, Madame President."

"And I didn't expect you to be alive, either," Laura pushed forward. Death on the horizon, cancer in the gut; these made you brave.

To Laura, this Helena was the Helena of *Atlantia*. Helena hurled through the muddle of life with steadfast determination, often leaving behind those who could not keep with the pace; she barged forward, never back. "I didn't *want* to see you again," the Admiral bit out.

Oh, that stung. Laura swiveled on her chair and stood.

Helena Cain followed her with her eyes, her expression fading into one of apprehension as Laura deliberately took the seat nearest to her.



Their shoulders touched and from her peripheral, Laura could see Helena press her head backwards into her chair, squeeze her eyes shut, and struggle with her breathing. Laura was the President and Cain, the Admiral, but this was hardly the perfect match. Michael had been right about many things, except that.

Laura did not dare touch her with her hands, did not trust herself to stop touching if she did. The shock of familiarity would choke them both if she tried.

"Damn it, Laura," Helena said with strangled forcefulness.

The air between them trembled with tenderness, with pain. "What happened, Helena?" Laura asked. "What happened out there, before we found you?"

"Do I have to tell you all my mistakes? The digressions of nearly three decades back and all the rest, which informed the necessities I've carried out? Do you *really* want to know?"

No, Laura did not want to know and made a move to touch her, but she stopped in the middle of the movement and put her hands back on her lap. Helena sat perfectly still, her eyes closed, shutting the frost beneath her lids.

After her father left the Roslin summer house in Caprica with Lt. Cain, Laura never saw Helena again. Seeing her now, hardly in possession of herself, stirred familiar feelings of when they were both soft, and young, and herding the sweat from each other's bodies.

"I forgave you," Laura whispered. "I forgave you over, and over, and over. And you never came back. You didn't even bury the dead." Her last sentence came out a little too severe but her voice hummed with warmth, regardless. "Now, that's all we do; we never go back, we always move forward. But... gods, Helena," the monologue sieved through Laura's emotions, tasted Helena's name like a drop of water on her parched tongue, and lowered, "My father didn't die in vain. I refuse to believe he did."

Laura hadn't noticed but her fingers grazed the uniform on Helena's cuffs, touching the accomplishments there, the many details of her life Laura had missed, and there was that almost imperceptible, jerking movement of Helena's hand, as though wanting to touch in return, but could not.

It remained clutching the chair when Bill Adama chose that time to step into the office, clearing his throat.

Laura turned to face him, while Helena merely tilted her head to the side. With regret, Laura took her seat behind the desk.

The two officers stared at her over the silence.

"Let's start this by admitting an ugly truth," Laura began, filling the space with something, anything. "What happened out there today was the result of failure in leadership of everyone in this room. We are the leaders of this fleet. As such, we need to set an example. We cannot continue to let the conflicts between..."

One could always count on Helena to interrupt. She always did on the dinner table.

"Oh, let's just cut through the handholding, shall we?" Cain said, reproachfully. "Two of his men murdered one of my officers while protecting a Cylon. They're guilty, they admitted it. And under regulations, I have complete authority to try, convict, and sentence them." The Admiral held Laura's gaze in a way that tightened Laura's chest, "And you and I both know that the penalty for that crime is death."

Laura's words felt slightly inadequate as they came out of her mouth. "The spirit of the law requires something here more than summary executions."

"Is this what the two of you have been doing for the past six months? Debating the finer points of colonial law?" Cain's voice dripped with sarcasm. "Well, guess what, we're at war! And we don't have the luxury of academic debate over these issues!"

"You want to cut through it, fine." Laura's invective remained quiet, restrained, but definitely pregnant with meaning. "You have *Pegasus*, he has *Galactica*. Two heavily armed, very powerful warships. Now, I am sure that *Pegasus* would prevail in any fight."

"I wouldn't count on that," Bill said under his breath, probably convinced that he would not concede to her superiority on that count either, even if it was a lie.

"But certainly," she continued telling Cain, "there'd be heavy damage and you'd take significant casualties. So you can go out there and fight it out with *Galactica* or you can compromise. And those are the only two options on the table, period."

Laura Roslin had spoken and there was really nothing more to do than accept the facts.

Helena Cain –the Cain who hated being cornered, who had never been too afraid to thrust herself into Laura's affections –took one last shot and said, "How the two of you have survived this long, I will never know."

Then she agreed to postpone Helo and Tyrol's trial, agreed to work with Bill, and a variety of other things that Laura knew just wasn't enough.

The sinking feeling in her stomach made her want to retch.

---

*"Hello," Cain said, kneeling before the seven-year old girl and touching her hair.*

*The sense of urgency she had felt earlier faltered, dissipated, fell short in front of the child and she found herself smiling; smiling at last after months of running, and attacking and being attacked, of losing familiar faces to the jaws of death, to the jaws of haughty civvies who just could not understand that they were at war.*

*"Hi," the child replied.*

*"What have you been doing all this time?" Cain asked gently.*

*"Well, Mommy..." The little girl's eyes moved to the woman in engineering cover-alls behind Cain; like a trapped kitten, the girl was frightened and quickly held Cain's gaze again.*

*The engineer was restrained by two of Cain's Marines and she witnessed the exchange with barely hidden horror. The little girl's lower lip began to tremble. "...Mommy and Daddy and I ran away from some very bad machines."*

*"I could see that," the Admiral crooned. "I'm here to take all the bad machines away. How would you say you take a little walk with Jack here," she indicated her XO, "and your Daddy and everyone else, and I promise you'll be safe from the machines, okay?"*

*"O...okay."*

*Behind her, she could hear the woman whimpering under her breath, her voice trembling under the weight of her emotions, "Oh my gods...oh my gods...p-please, please don't do this."*

*The little girl's eyes were welling up, mirrors of her mother's as her little brain tried to comprehend the tension in the room. Her father held her shoulders, glared in terror and hate and his misunderstanding of Cain's actions. Cain accepted it, as she had everything else. Gator Cain whispered in her ear, it had to be done after all.*

*The Cylon threat hung over all their heads like a sword and by the gods she would not allow anything to compromise the advantage they were in.*

*Cain stood and gestured to Fisk, her voice hard, "Do what you have to but if Scylla's engineers won't leave their families here to serve on the Pegasus, execute them." She turned to the engineer, as though shoving the point across. "All of them."*

The memory brought her back to the cell just as she stepped in. She barely acknowledged Gaius Baltar on one side, the two Marines hovering beside her as she stared at the pathetic figure before her.

It huddled on the floor like a worm, its skin covered with welts. A fitting color, Cain thought, for all the sins it had committed, for the sins it had made *her* commit.

They were both quite far from salvation, Cain thought, and that brought a self-deprecating smile on her face. They were demons from the underworld, disembarking from Charon's boat.

"You know," she told Baltar as she began to circle the Cylon like a vulture. "This *thing* used to sit in our mess and eat our food, and listen to our stories." She felt the familiar wrath crawling out of the mask. "Didn't you?" she grated at the thing. "You just sat there, listening to us. Pretending to be our friend. *Didn't you?*" Her last words were fierce and she allowed her impulses to take over.

She kicked the Gina model, spat on the thing, and felt a grim satisfaction in seeing it fold into itself in pain.

Baltar visibly cringed and said, "Admiral, please! Any...physical contact with the subject will only set my efforts back at this point."

She didn't care and she shoved the photographs into his arms, "Find out about that ship."

Stepping out of the cell was like stepping out of smog and she breathed deeply, catching the dribbles of humanity with her fingers and finding, as she always did, that these were not enough, were never enough.

---

There were civilians out there who would not take kindly to Cain's methods. Laura Roslin knew it all too well: Zarek and the Saggitaron resistance and all the rest who clung to their way of life with possessiveness. There would be blood.

Laura's father had told her a long, long time ago that the military hardly understood the enormity of the plans of those above them: the state, the Quorum of Twelve, the President, the People. There were the few of course, who did; but then there were also those who truly believed in their own methods, in their own losses to justify all other gains.

Laura could remember a time Helena Cain stood on the same side of the fence while gloriously absorbed in her *politismos*, in the mine-identity which had shaped her as a child. Self-reliance, belief in the commune, the tight-knit structure of people who lived with death on their shoulder; it was a compulsion to dig out anyone who had been buried, to know that the last body in the hole must always come out.

Helena Cain was still on that same side, except she was a figure blurred beyond recognition and Laura wondered what it would have been like, if she had touched her earlier on, planted forgiveness on those lips and painted her into the colors of Laura's past by virtue of her touch.

No, no use in that.

Cain was what she was, Laura thought, shaped by her times in much the same way she and Bill had been; except Cain was alone on the *Pegasus*, struck with notions that hope had fled, and did her duty amidst this belief with unwavering fortitude for months and months at a time.

It could have driven other people mad. It would have changed *politismos* into a driving, cruel force.

Laura suddenly felt tired, felt the insidious hands of her cancer creep over her ribs as Bill forced the words from his mouth and sounded about as horrified as she felt.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Like she said; let's cut through it. The two of you were willing to go to war today." It had been too true. Decades past did many, many things to the threads that had tied them all together. They had rusted into shadows of their former selves, listless and forgotten, snapping at the merest sign of pressure. "Do you think she's going to step down from that? She's going to bide her time and hit you the first chance she gets. That's a given."

She could see Bill stiffening, could feel her own heart protesting with provocation in the confines of her chest. But she could also feel her mind laying claim to the facts that this was the only path out of this, the only way to claim their way of life. "I hate to lay this on you Bill, but she is dangerous and the only thing that you can do is to hit her before she hits you."

"I'm not an assassin."

His words rang about the room like the bells of Athena's Hall.

Laura stood from Cain's chair, which she had occupied right after the woman left. "No. You're not an assassin," she slowly said. "You are a colonial officer who has taken an oath to protect this fleet."

The justification came automatically, a flood of logic and truth that had been wielded by her father, and then by her. She allowed herself to speak, her voice unbroken, not stopping or thinking of what would come after. "What do you think that she is going to do with the civilian fleet once she has eliminated you? You know I'm right. You just don't want to face it."

Neither of them did, and Bill, steeped in his knowledge of what his relationship to his former wing-man had been, could only express his frustration.

"So the whole world's going mad?"

He didn't wait for her answer; he stood up to leave.

She felt betrayed by time, by fate and she sank into her chair, covering her eyes, cold and unfeeling as she waited for tears that wouldn't come.

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TO BE CONTINUED...

## Lay Down Your Burdens

He leaned by the make-shift bed, looking at his President as she breathed deeply, lay resolute before the fate the gods had given her. Except she managed to look worse every time he saw her.

"You were right about Cain," he told her. "*Pegasus* had a civilian fleet with her, fifteen ships. Cain stripped them. For parts, supplies..." He choked out the last word, "people."

He reminisced on the time Lt. Cain, his wing-man, did not sleep while Michael Roslin drew resolutions for the Colonial government and made her read them out loud, right in the middle of the Persephone Base mess hall amidst cheers and the occasional rant. The mess became a hall of debate. After, she would take these pieces of paper to the Taurons and Styxians picketed outside the base's fence, whispering the resolutions to them like a storyteller amidst children.

It had been a powerful image, subverted by the realities of the present.

"I wish I could say I was surprised, but it's who she is," Laura told him. "She's playing for keeps; you've got to do the same."

He patted her over the blanket. "What's gotten into you?" There was a sigh while Bill continued, "You've gotten so bloody-minded."

"I know that as long as Cain lives, your survival is at risk, I know that." He felt his throat tighten, and not entirely from the sorry image Roslin made as she coughed and as he handed her a glass of water, but more for the woman Cain had become. "What can I get you?"

"A new body. Perhaps, one of those young Cylon models from the Resurrection Ship."

The joke rippled through them, silently, tenderly, and Bill threw in another pebble, "I can't see you as a blonde."

"You'd be surprised." She laughed feebly and Bill felt the urge to voice it out, if only to convince himself that she would be there the next time he visited, "We'll see you tomorrow."

"Mm-hmm." A comfortable silence then, "Commander, she won't hesitate to kill you. Don't let her."

They shared the sadness, and even the sanity, like water from a well running dry and it was Bill's hesitation to rise from his chair that urged Laura to put a hand on his arm.

"What is it, Bill?"

"I don't know if this is the proper time to tell you."

"I'm not dead yet. I'd sooner you tell me now."

He sighed, a low, rumbling sound and for a moment, he hesitated. "She talked about you," he said. "Often. As much as she talked about the statutes, the Styxians, the poli...poli-something."

"*Politismos*," she filled in kindly.

"She talked a lot about *politismos*," he repeated, while rubbing a thumb against Laura's wrist, trying to impart some of his warmth as he felt how cold she was. "And she told stories about Caprica, and the university in the city. And about you." His voice lowered, as it delved into territory that it hadn't tried to breach before. "When Michael died, she told me something before Fleet Command finally transferred and promoted her."

"I don't know if I want to hear this."

"She told me," Bill carried on. "That if I ever saw you –the Roslin with the fiery hair –that she was sorry, and sorrier still for all the things she was going to do, all the things she was *ever* going to do, from that time on."

But Laura had already turned away, staring at the bulkhead with a bloated grief that threatened to burst. Bill whispered again, "She said she was sorry. She still is, for everything."

"That doesn't make everything okay, Bill."

"No. But what I'm trying to say is that: I hope the gods are kind enough that I won't have to do what I have to do."

Laura turned to him, her face pale and her eyes dimmer. "So say we all, Commander. So say we all."

---

Helena Cain couldn't take the heaviness off her chest; she wasn't quite ready for the revelations it would bring if she faced it.

Bill had become a liability. Fisk had his orders and if, after the battle for the Resurrection Ship everything went according to plan, she would have two ships instead of one.

Instead of making her way to her quarters, she found herself stopping by the hangar deck, where Vipers hummed and choked on oil, grease; where pilots seemed as resolute about flying as they were about getting drunk or losing all their possessions in a card game. Death in the cock-pit put everything into perspective; health and property were fed to chance.

Her deck chief quickly came to attention and she raised a hand to keep him from announcing that she was present. Instead, she discreetly approached a familiar figure, laughing in these dire times in much the same way Helena would on Persephone Base during the Accord, when everyone seemed to pose arguments against her.

She found an elusive peace behind the Tauron-Styxian picket lines; she recited the resolutions Michael drew for them, whispering in a concrete voice that reinforced a genuine, Styxian

passion; she would laugh with them, eat with them, be condemned because of them but she had been young and no amount of pressure from the Tauron-ousodis could pull her away.

"Lieutenant Thrace," she called and the woman stood in attention.

The officers around her, formerly from *Galactica*, followed suit, saluting with their terror-stricken respect.

When had it come to this, Cain asked herself as they looked at her with shifty, uncertain eyes. When had any of it come to this?

"If you could join me at my office, please."

"Of course, Admiral."

Bill Adama commanded a silent, nurturing loyalty and it bubbled out of Starbuck easily enough. Cain knew exactly how it felt. She had been under his command, too.

*Godsfrakkit.*

Unlike all those years ago, she was going to fight with fire and tribulation for the only home she had; no resolutions, no talking, no negotiations. Just fire and brimstone and the gods damn her if she didn't try. She just didn't have the luxury to question her decisions; the world had gone mad and -madly enough -it warranted the end of William Adama's command.

It was a pounding insistence: they hadn't lost war. There were battles to be won.

Upon arrival in her office, Cain fetched a bottle of ambrosia and two glasses, harbingers of a conversation that Helena hoped would be an open one and less a product of fear.

"You drink, Thrace?" she asked, opening the bottle and pouring the drinks as she placed everything on the table.

"Only to excess, sir."

"Only to excess?" Cain said. She regarded the Captain with curiosity. "Learn that from Colonel Tigh, did you?"

"Not exactly."

"I understand you belted him once."

The captain's façade chipped. "That's something I did without really thinking."

"Don't apologize," Cain told her. "Some people get exactly what they deserve." Oh, did she know this. Forget the past, chuck all other obstacles from one's way without thinking, and it came back and bit you hard. Cain's gut felt like falling out, bitten and bruised, but her face remained passive. "From what I read about your XO, maybe he needs to get popped in the mouth every once in while, hm?"



Kara Thrace had the decency to keep her opinions to herself, and it prompted Cain to change the tide of the conversation.

"I know you're very close to Adama," she ventured.

"Yes, sir."

"And I know he's a good man." William 'Bill' Adama, the rock Cain held to if only for a time after the Accord fell apart and Michael Roslin found himself in a six-foot box. "And I know he's had to make some very hard choices over the last few months. Lord knows I have."

Starbuck wasn't without her own mind. "Well then maybe you can understand why he did what he thought he had to do when you said you were going to execute Helo and Tyrol."

It came, gushing out unto the surfaces of the room. Seeping from the crevices of Cain's past and flooding the present. There was compunction in her voice, and resentment. But there was also tranquility in knowing that it was all she could have possibly done.

"Let me tell you something," Cain said, very quietly. "I've had to watch a lot of kids be put into body bags. They're covered with flags and they float out that airlock. You think I don't understand his feelings towards his men?"

Thrace didn't seem keen on an answer, so Cain continued, "Sometimes terrible things have to be done. Inevitably, each and every one of us will have to face a moment where we have to commit that horrible sin." Oh gods, little girls in three-foot coffins. Gods, gods... would she ever escape the little, crying hands that held her at night? "And if we flinch in that moment, if we hesitate for one second, if we let our conscience get in the way, you know what happens?"

"There are more kids in those body bags. More kids floating out that airlock." They darted out to space, those things, covered with Colonial colors as Cain crushed second-guessing with a grim, unalterable hand. She watched their parents erode the banks of hope and stopped her own tears from falling into their rivers. She would not shirk her duties, even then.

She continued as Kara Thrace stared at her with no heart to protest, "I don't know why... but I have a lot of faith in you. And I want you to promise me that when that moment comes you won't flinch." Cain's hands tightened into fists and she wondered if the words, once spoken, would do anything to change the reality they were in. "Do not flinch."

---

After the battle, Kara Thrace would report to Helena Cain, wait for Bill's command, and kill the admiral during the throes of victory.

For Bill, it wasn't going to be an easy decision. He needed something more, something beyond Laura Roslin's soft persuasion.

Everything in him screamed dissent. Helena Cain had been his wing-man, had been the person who watched his back more thoroughly than he did his own; he owed her more than a shot to the head.

It was highly unlikely that the person now standing before him should give him the answers he wanted to hear. Seeing her was tactically sound, militarily; sometimes, one had to understand the enemy to understand oneself.

He asked her to sit down, watched as she hobbled to the couch and nodded appreciatively when he sat beside her with nothing less than trust.

"I've asked you here to find out why the Cylons hate us so much."

She looked slightly bewildered. "I'm not sure I know how to answer that. I mean, hate might not be the right word."

"I don't want to fence with you," Bill sighed. "I just want to know why."

Sharon looked pensive, a small smile tugging at her lips. "It's what you said at the ceremony before the attack when *Galactica* was being decommissioned. You gave a speech that sounded like it wasn't the one you prepared. You said that humanity was a flawed creation. And that people still kill one another for petty jealousy and greed." Shadows of her rape in the hands of *Pegasus* officers gathered beneath her eyes. "You said that humanity never asked itself why it deserved to survive. Maybe you don't."

---

Nobody flinched. Nobody could afford to.

It was an elegant operation that stripped the two basestars of their squadrons and left them without their Cylon infantry. The two battlestars circled, took the brunt of the attack, while their canons battered the defenseless Cylon ships in an orchestra of fire.

When Apollo and the blackbird slipped past Cylon dradis and destroyed the Resurrection Ship's FTL drives, Helena felt the cold, streaming waters of vindication. Victory –that addictive strain of emotions –felt sweeter than it had ever been.

The next task felt like swatting flies from the walls. The Cylons began their retreat.

She reached for the wireless, unaware that her gratitude for Bill's contribution slipped uncontrollably into her voice.

"Congratulations, Commander."

*"Congratulations to you too, Admiral. A significant victory."* She could taste the jubilation, feel it in his voice. She could remember her wing-man carrying her on his shoulders as they celebrated her 100th landing, her 30th kill, her first successful run against a Cylon squadron.

He asked for Starbuck and she humored him.

Captain Thrace seemed drained of color as she listened over the wireless. After their recent campaign, Cain couldn't blame her if she was less than eager. Losing pilots was hard on anyone and officers had the ugly business of billeting the dead into coffins.

Cain saw Thrace's hands fidgeting on her sides, sweat on her brow; Cain remembered the mission she had entrusted to Fisk, thought idly that Thrace should have been happier for her heroics that day.

After Thrace's, "I think that's very wise, sir. Thank you," Cain asked for Fisk on the other line.

"Congratulations, Jack," she told her XO.

"*Thank you, sir.*" Cain could hear the tension in his voice. Her marines would have surrounded the *Galactica* CIC by now and he seemed all too hesitant to carry her orders to their conclusion.

She breathed out, "That's all."

Relief? Gratitude? Perhaps, all of these in the cadence of Jack's voice. "*Yes, sir.*"

She felt it wash over her, a thousand whispers of forgiveness that compensated for everything else. And there, in the *Pegasus* CIC, she put a hand to her neck as all her tensions tapered to a delicious ache.

---

Helena Cain looked out the *Colonial One's* windows, investigating the *Pegasus'* docking bay, the grey hollows and blinking lights, the latest CAP huddled on a platform as the Vipers descended to the deck below. Her neck had become a painful nuisance and she was tempted to unbutton the uniform as the pressures of combat battered her in the aftermath.

She could hear Laura say, "I took the liberty of landing on the *Pegasus*. I hope you don't mind."

"It's a very sound, diplomatic move, Madame President."

They shared a secret smile, unspoken worries and Laura Roslin led her to the presidential office.

Laura dismissed her aide and the two of them were left alone in the room. There was a long, mysterious silence as they stared at each other, trying to assess the sudden space they were in, trying to muster the events that had led to this place.

They supposed that nobody expected to be seeing the other quite as promptly.

Laura chose to speak. "Congratulations, Admiral."

"Likewise," Cain said.

"You didn't kill him."

Oh, Helena should have expected Laura's unscrupulous love of gore and details. Cain suppressed a fond smile, remembering also the boxing matches Michael would take them to

and Laura's unintelligible, delighted screams that made Helena laugh in embarrassment and predilection.

Michael had a penchant for keeping Helena in constant discomfort, only because he liked to test the spectrum of her reactions. Laura and boxing matches had been a long and arduous test.

"No. I didn't think it was necessary," Cain said casually, as though nothing was amiss. "William merited something more, if only for keeping you in your right mind."

"Is that what you think he's been doing?" Laura asked. Her eyes were laughing. "Keeping me in my right mind?"

"Yes." No secrets between them now and Helena took the seat Laura offered. Laura's hand had settled on Helena's knee and she stared at it as she would anything unfamiliar. A pat, and the hand withdrew.

"I'm glad..." They both knew that there were too many things to say but Laura kept to the simplest of them. "I'm glad that we're all alive. It feels safer that you're around."

"I wouldn't count on that."

"I didn't always feel that way, but I do now."

*I forgave you over, and over, and over.* Cain considered Laura for a moment before saying, "I'd still have the prisoners' heads."

"Admiral, I honestly don't expect anything less from you but I hope that..." Laura changed her tone, changed the drift of her thought, and said with finality, "I hope. That's what I do, for all of us."

"Should we lay our burdens at your feet?" There was hardly any mockery in Cain's voice but Laura seemed to crumble at the suggestion. "Gods, Laura." Exasperation. "What are you hiding?"

Laura Roslin looked at her, a lingering hardness that spoke over the ages they had been apart. She took Cain's hand and before the admiral could protest, brought it over her chest and said, "I'm dead, Helena." Cain's eyes went from Laura's to the warmth that ensconced her hand, and back to Laura's face.

Realization. The paleness, the way Laura seemed to walk this world like a ghost, transparent and fragile.

"Gods, no."

"Quite simply, that." There was another, sudden kink on Helena's shoulder. She squeezed her eyes shut. Her hand darted to the strain on her shoulder, trying to wean some relief while her brain overloaded with a surplus of disquiet, pain, regrets.

"Here, let me get that," Laura said softly, reaching between them and resting a hand on where the strain was.

Tender but firm fingers –something that Laura's touch had always been –settled on Helena's neck and Helena Cain could not bring herself to pull away.

---

She could barely understand Gaius Baltar who stared into her eyes and seemed more whole when he did, or why it was that he told her to live and have her justice. 'God's Will' seemed to be the only explanation, except her mind could barely turn in the muck that was her hate, barely *believe* the pantheon of Cylon doctrines.

It hadn't been about hate, Gina told herself. Months in the cell, violations of every sort, and a body that meant as little to them as it was beginning to mean for her...as little as it already was to her. How could it not have turned into hate?

*Suicide is a sin. But I need to die.*

The firearm felt all too familiar in her hands.

Helena Cain entered her office –she was the Admiral who tortured her, sank figurative teeth into her skin, who condoned rape and violence on prisoners of war; there would be no other judgment for the Admiral except death and damnation.

Gina's lips twisted into a satisfied leer. There would be no escape.

Helena Cain touched her neck as though a ghost of a distant pain had burrowed there. There was something exasperatingly satisfied about her as she unbuttoned her uniform, creased as it already was with fore-touches of a different sort. A rare, child-like smile lent the room buoyancy.

It affected a hot, searing anger that lacerated Gina's chest; she escaped the shadows, mimicking Cain's words with mockery, with the saturation of beyond-pain.

"Tell me Admiral," she said. Cain pivoted towards the direction of Gina's voice. "Can you roll over? Beg?"

Admiral Cain tried to process how the prisoner had gotten to her room. It was the most precious. The deer-in-the-headlights look of being stripped of everything at the moment everything was right at hand. Gina savored it and it swelled inside her like a satisfying drought of liquid fire.

"Frak you," Cain spat. Defiant to the end, was she?

*We'll see about that. "You're not my type."*

Gina pulled the trigger on Helena Cain then promptly put the gun to her head. She repeated the action and saw the light burst in every direction like a wanton supernova.

There was nothing after that. The sweet nothing of true death.

---

To the Gods,

*I don't think I've ever had the goddess of desire sing so completely to me, in a voice that rattled with strange hymns; that echoed about strange temples and beat, beat, beat like a tribal drum on a midsummer night.*

*I don't think anybody had ever bitten my ear in quite the same way, walked on all fours like a mountain cat privy to the gods' more menacing acts –put the entirety of her self for show and then, in that bitter, stinging style –replaced her fingers with fire. And nothing, oh no nothing, was performance from then on.*

*She rode on a different wind, pulled at my tresses with spider-fingers that stuck like ominous wands into my suit, my blouse, my somehow unadventurous bra.*

*I would writhe. And bend and shatter and melt into a pool, begging the gods to please –oh continue, and oh...don't stop! Or spiral into tides of forgetting –forgetting who I was, what I stood for, who it was that now loomed over me like milky tar of sky, gloom and desire. I would reach for her neck, untie the heavy knots of decades there and she would moan beneath my touch, kiss my mouth and line my teeth with her tongue. I'd taste more than thirty years of both our lives on her skin.*

*I've been told that I am my father's daughter, a product of the old world he once occupied, the little girl he treated so much like a son. On his lap I learned everything. The way men worked and stretched like worn rubber for him. The way women would bend their full bodies into his glass that he may drink, and drink, and drink.*

*But the old world was gone and so was my youth, replaced by old wars, life on an old battlestar and age that sank deeper into my bones as I dealt with pre-eminent Death.*

*Here I was, lingering in wet corners and plucking at sweet nubs of fruit that spread with the flavors of her. With the scent of her. With the newness of her that clung to me in nodes of sweat, heat, and wrath.*

*The Cylon would forever silence those thoughts, steal her affections and replace them with nothing. I would tell Bill Adama later on, "Thank the gods that you did not have to do what I advised," with understated relief and all the unsung pain of seeing him take her place.*

*I already knew that I could never go back.*

*So I drowned. Drowned enough that when I pulled through meandering pleasures, my throat was dry and I breathed only her.*

*Gods, I believe we deserve to live. I believe we deserve to survive if only for this, if only for everything that Helena Cain had proven, everything Bill proves every day because and in spite of our faults. You can damn us for it, batter us to extinction for it but I swear that as a people, that as I live and breathe, we will never flinch.*

Laura Roslin

*President of the Twelve Colonies*

*The Colonial Fleet*

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~Fin~

## End Notes

I'm aware of the time-line inconsistencies in this story and did everything out of convenience. I'm assuming Cain is five or six years younger than Roslin and that the Cylon insurrection happened less than forty years before the Cylon attack on the Colonies; basically I screwed up their ages and the BSG time-line so I could make this work. I'm also assuming that there have been identity/ethnicity problems (and a whole lot of other problems) when the Articles of Colonization were newly drawn.

I apologize for any and all inconsistencies with regards to my knowledge of the Law, the Articles of Colonization, the Colonial government, its military, diplomats, negotiation processes et cetera, et cetera.

The story was written for the getyourtoaster Holiday Challenge in response to deifire's prompt:

pairing: Roslin/Cain

rating: Any

squicks: None

prompt: Wrath (I interpreted this very loosely)

Feedback is appreciated and concrit is love!

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