

FOREWORD

BY RICHARD HATCH

DURING the past 30 years, I have had the pleasure of being part of an incredible universe, where the very best and worst of humanity can be explored and played out in the most heartfelt, profound, and awe-inspiring ways imaginable. *Battlestar Galactica* is that kind of story.

Who would have believed that so many decades later I would still be part of a series and epic story that exploded upon the world stage in 1978, and is still leaving an indelible imprint in the minds, hearts, and imaginations of fans three generations later. The new and re-imagined version of *Battlestar* has not only garnered a dedicated and passionate fan base, but has achieved what few sci-fi series in history have attained—nearly unanimous critical acclaim. Many industry and trade publications, including *Time* magazine, have called *Battlestar Galactica* the #1 best television show on TV, period. That's a rarity for a sci-fi series, although most view *Battlestar* as more of a character-driven drama with powerful action sequences.

What makes this provocative and cutting-edge series so rare is its ability to shed insight into the volatile post-9/11 world of today. *Battlestar Galactica* may take place somewhere else in this vast universe of ours, but people

are people and humanity still struggles to come to terms with its dark side. J. Michael Straczynski was one of the first sci-fi writers to explore the concept that few people are all good or all bad, and that in truth most of us lie somewhere between the two supposedly opposite dynamics. *Battlestar Galactica* writer/producer, Ron Moore, and company have taken this concept to a whole new level, exploring the ultimate battle between the dark and the light, and the heroic struggle to come to terms with our demons. Science fiction has never been just about technology or science, it's always been about people, and no one has brought this message home in a more powerful and visionary way than Ron Moore. *Battlestar* has truly—in the words of Gene Roddenberry—gone where few men and woman have gone before: exploring the deepest and darkest aspects of human nature and somehow finding the light.

I love this story because it's about all of us. Most fans I know would give anything to throw on a uniform and become part of a world where we can test our mettle and survive the unimaginable. Whether it be flying helter-skelter through the universe in a Viper, or using our cunning, bravery, and unique skill set to overcome some monumental life and death circumstance, this story puts all of us

into the most challenging and life threatening conditions possible. By forcing us to face our deepest fears, we are asked to go to the core of our being and find creative, life-saving solutions in the face of insurmountable odds. Whether we ultimately stand or fall, this is the true journey of the hero!

Being cast from your homeland and forced to find your way in the world is an epic and universal theme. Going through life-changing ups and downs before finding your true place is a story and path we can all relate to, and one that grabbed us many years before when *Battlestar Galactica* first debuted on ABC. Ron Moore's profound re-imagined vision for *Battlestar* has taken this archetypal story to the pinnacle of great drama, pathos, and theatrical accomplishment. It has enthralled a whole new generation of fans.

Questions about who are we, where we came from, and is their truly life out in the cosmos echo our wildest imaginings. They have compelled many of us to fall passionately in love with this beloved story. The new *Battlestar Galactica Role Playing Game* you now hold in your hands beckons all of us to step out of the box and into a larger and more expanded playing field where we can finally explore all of our childhood and grownup fantasies, and actually live the incredible adventure that

Battlestar Galactica brings to us each week on television. There's a reason why we're so dedicated to this wonderful story and why most of us would give anything to be a part of this amazing series. It's because we're craving the excitement and heart-pounding adrenalin rush we rarely get in our daily life. Role playing is becoming the cutting edge of gaming today because now you don't have to be a high-paid actor to experience the thrill of creating a juicy character and compelling storyline where you can challenge your mind, body, and soul, and let your imagination soar. Just like life, this *Battlestar* game brings out the best and worst in us and lets us all find out what we're really made of. Are we the hero, the rebel, the villain, the backstabber? Are we conflicted and struggling to come to terms with our flaws and imperfections just like the rest of the full-blown characters on the television show. I like the challenge of finding out, and I'm sure you will too.

Keep the faith. As we actors say before we go on stage "break a leg," which means GO FOR IT!!! So say we all!!



THE CHASE IS ON

Battlestar Galactica. Sounds all damn big and grand, full up with destiny and purpose. Fact is, the fate of the entire human race rests on the decisions of its Commander and the actions of its officers and crew. Some folks think fate, destiny, or some horse manure like that is leading humanity to a mythical port in the storm called Earth. The naysayers claim *Galactica* is just delaying the inevitable: the destruction of every human man, woman, and child at the hands of their own creation—the Cylons.

Battlestar Galactica is a damned impressive television series produced by Ronald D. Moore and David Eick. It explores ageless human problems in the context of a refugee fleet struggling to survival against an almost unstoppable enemy. The universe is all about grim struggle. The future of the human race is in doubt. Bravery in the face of overwhelming odds ain't the rare acts of a heroic few. It's demanded from everyone nearly every day. Acts of kindness in times of want reveal true compassion. And small victories amid soul-crushing defeats are the only things keeping hope alive.

Battlestar Galactica is a scarred and aging bucket of bolts. Like its Commander, it should've been retired more than a few years ago. It also should have been forgotten—a footnote in the pages of history, a stark reminder of the terrible Cylon War. Cylons didn't buy into that though. They came back, in force and spitting fire and devastation. The old battlegewagon was called back to arms. Smart enough not to fight a suicidal war, the crew of *Battlestar Galactica* now leads a rag-tag fleet toward an impossible dream. Ancient scrolls name the legendary home of the Thirteenth Tribe, one that did not settle with the rest of humanity.

That world is known as Earth.

Escape means difficult choices, terrible sacrifices, and a long and taxing journey through the unforgiving blackness of space. If a time of black-and-white morality ever really existed, it's been replaced with shades of gray that get harder to distinguish with each passing day. The survivors in the fleet have banded together, but hard times ain't done a damn thing to change human nature. Hell, if anything, it's gotten worse. Greed and lust and every other venal human impulse are alive and well, causing as much trouble and heartache as ever.

Most just hope to find shelter and safety—to survive another day. A few set their sights higher—to prove the human race worthy of survival.

ROLE PLAYING GAME

If you're pawing through this volume, you probably have some notion what *Battlestar Galactica* is. On the other hand, you may have no frakking clue what a role playing game is. You look through it and find jargon, numbers, rules, and examples—might seem like one big mess. Don't underestimate yourself. If you've managed to stay interested this far, you got the chops for role playing. The basics are child's play—literally. Children play role playing games all the time without even thinking about it.

Any game where you pretend to be someone else is an exercise in role playing. In Cops & Robbers, everyone has a part to play: the heroic police or the greedy criminals. It doesn't really matter whether the



cops or the robbers win—long as the players all have fun. A tabletop role playing game, like this one, ain't much different. It's just got a bit more structure, and more focus on the story. Playing Cops & Robbers, you might argue over whether a gunshot was a hit or miss, and rarely does an overarching tale unfold. In the *Battlestar Galactica Role Playing Game*, you have rules and the roll of the dice tell you exactly what happened and when. You can also get involving in an exciting, even moving, plotline. The goal is not different though—having a good time.

THE GAME

The book you're reading is called the *Battlestar Galactica Role Playing Game (RPG)*, but the heart of the game is an experience shared with your friends. This book is a tool to help you play the game, but friends, a set of gaming dice, and a good imagination are all crucial as well.

Every player in the game has an important role. Most portray one character—either one from the television show or a new character created using the rules in **Chapter Two: Characters**. You could be a rising-star politician, a cocky fighter pilot, a trigger-happy marine, an ace mechanic, or just about anyone else that fits in the framework of the story.

One player has a slightly different role: the Game Master (GM). He sets the stage, interprets the rules,

and portrays all of the supporting characters in the BSG universe. The job, and the rewards, are a bit bigger for the GM, but that doesn't make the other players less important.

If you're a nugget, fresh to role playing games, and don't have an experienced player around, take a moment and visit www.bsg-rpg.com if you are looking for some help. There you can find the *Battlestar Galactica RPG Quickstart Guide*. It has simplified rules, pre-made characters, and a short scenario designed to teach new players the basics. It serves as a quality introduction to the full game in this book. But don't sell yourself short—you don't need a Dr. Baltar-sized intellect here. You should be able to handle the full game just fine.

You can approach this game a number of ways. One is to play through “one-off” adventures—self-contained stories that are completed in one or two sessions of play. This style allows a group to explore the BSG universe from many different angles. You could set one adventure on Caprica, fighting with the human resistance. Next time you could be onboard *Galactica* itself, and after that you might take on the Cylon point of view.

Another option is campaign style, which has a lot in common with the storytelling of the television series. Each player makes a character and keeps that role throughout a series of adventures, either a “mini-series” that ends after several sessions or a long, epic storyline that could take years of play to see through. Characters and relationships grow and change, momentous events peak and trough—some characters might very well die along the way. (If it's your character, don't worry, you

can create another, or take over the role of one previously portrayed by the Game Master.)

In the end, you'll have some great memories to share.

Before you start play, a few basics need to be covered. Give them a quick read before jumping ahead.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

If you think of a BSG adventure as a television show played out on the game table, the player characters (or PCs for short) are the stars. They make decisions, take actions, and endure the consequences—good or bad—that form the heart of the storyline. Everyone at the game table takes the role of one PC, except for the Game Master. In the show, characters such as Starbuck, Apollo, Helo, Commander Adama, and President Roslin would be considered PCs. Supporting roles, background characters, and villains are known as nonplayer characters (NPCs) and are portrayed by the Game Master. Cylon Centurions, Tom Zarek, Doc Cottle, and members of *Galactica's* crew—they're important, but they're still NPCs.

The TV show stars aren't the only possibility, however. Players can create new PCs completely from scratch. They generate game information from the rules, then flesh out a history and personality to make the character come alive. Some start with a vague concept and let their PC grow during play. Other players might think up a boatload of background and mannerisms before the first game session. Both approaches work, just depends on the personal tastes of the player.

You can play a character who looks and acts much like you do in real life. You could also adopt a persona as different from you as Starbuck is from Colonel Tigh—one that looks, acts, and speaks differently. Even the gender of the player is irrelevant. Starbuck could easily be played by a guy.

Personality conflicts, feuds, and arguments happen all the time in BSG-style storytelling, and a good game session might have more than one. Just remember that while the PCs might not always get along, all those conflicts should stay within the game. You're here to have fun with your friends, not annoy or disturb each other.

The specifics of creating and playing player characters are found in **Chapter Two: Characters** and **Chapter Three: Traits & Skills**.

GAME MASTER

The Game Master has a different job. While the players focus on their own characters,

the GM keeps an eye on the big picture and moves the story along. He describes the setting, becoming the eyes and ears (and all of the other senses) of the players. The GM sets the stage that the PCs play on. Like a good commander, the GM needs to know the rules, and also understand their place in the storytelling experience. Finally, the GM portrays dozens of NPCs in a single session; he is the voice of everyone who isn't a player character.

Watch it here, though. The GM may be playing the Cylons, rival politicians, criminals, and other adversaries, but he is never "against" the players. In fact, with the power placed in the GM's hands, it would be simple to kill all the PCs in just a few short minutes. Game over—not much fun. Instead, the GM walks the fine line of challenging the PCs without constantly overwhelming them. Those challenges could be mental puzzles, dangerous combat, or encounters that can only be resolved through good role playing. (A good game includes all of these elements.) In the end, it's the GM's primary mission to make sure the players are having a good time—even when the player characters are miserable and frightened within the story! If the GM is just trying to kill the PCs or play out his whims at the expense of the players, the game will dry up and stop damn quick. No reason for the players to put up with that crap.

The GM is the arbiter of the game, the one to settle disagreements. He makes judgment calls on the rules, and herds a particular scene along to keep the game moving. Ultimately, the GM's rule is law, but the focus should be on everyone having fun while telling a great story, not who is "in charge." The game isn't the military, and the GM is only the GM as long as the rest of the players buy into it.

For more information Game Mastering, see **Chapter Seven: Game Master**.

SESSIONS, ADVENTURES, AND CAMPAIGNS

Stories in the *Battlestar Galactica* RPG can be broken down and defined in three ways.

A "session" occurs whenever your group sits down to play. It could take anywhere from a few hours to an entire day, if you can shirk your other duties that long. You might get through a short storyline in one session, but it's likely that you'll only play through part of one before having to break until the next time. Players' schedules dictate just how often a group can get together, but many groups like to gather for sessions once a week, twice a month, or one extra long session each month. One player should be in charge of confirming the game day and time with the group and

GAMING DICE

The *Battlestar Galactica* RPG uses six different types of polyhedral (multi-sided) dice. Roll the die type called for by the game and use the result rolled.



Dice are pretty self-explanatory (a d4 has four sides, a d6 has six sides, and so on), except for the d2. While you might be able to purchase six-sided dice with only 1s and 2s on the faces, it's just as easy to use a normal d6. A roll of 1-3 indicates a 1, 4-6 means a 2. You might also be able to purchase a blank die and create your own d2.

You can purchase gaming dice at almost any hobby or book store that sells role playing games. Beginners sometimes find it helpful to have dice of different colors to tell the different types apart. Others pride themselves on matching sets. Margaret Weis Productions, Ltd. sells d2 game dice on the company website.

making sure everyone can make it. While groups often hold sessions at the Game Master's home, any player can act as the host. Some play in other venues: coffee shops, conference rooms, or any other locale that is free of distractions.

An "adventure" is a single story often played out in several sessions. Like any story, it has a beginning, middle, and end. That end doesn't stop the game, though, or make you start a new one—elements and characters might carry over from a previous adventure and the consequences of the current story might come back to haunt the group in the future! Like an episode of the television series, one adventure often leads to the next.

A "campaign" is a series of adventures that tell a larger story. If the adventures are the gaming equivalent of individual episodes, a campaign is the television series as a whole. While a game could be episodic—that's where story threads don't carry over from one adventure to the next—it's likely that the adventures weave together to tell a grand tale. Campaign style is generally the most popular form of play, as it allows for characters to grow, change, take risks, live, or die. Some campaigns focus only particular PCs; others might revolve around a central goal (such as the search for Earth in the television series).

For more information about crafting adventures or running campaigns, see **Chapter Seven: Game Master**.

GAMING GEAR

It doesn't take a lot of gear to play the *Battlestar Galactica* RPG. You don't need to upgrade your RAM, get a better graphics card, or install a larger hard drive. Each group needs a copy of this book, pencils, paper,

and a set of gaming dice. You also need a quiet place where your group won't disturb others or be disturbed while playing. Lots of groups prefer to sit around a table, but that isn't absolutely essential. Some like to use miniature figurines as visual aids for combat and chase scenes, but those are not required either.

Snacks and beverages are always welcome additions to the game. Share the load though; the host shouldn't be stuck providing for ravenous masses every session.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TWELVE COLONIES

The Sacred Scrolls tell that the human race originated on a world called Kobol, the home of the gods. A terrible catastrophe drove mankind away, and thirteen tribes left the cursed world behind. Twelve of the tribes found a place to dwell together, each on their own world within one system. A Thirteenth Tribe fled far from the others, to a world called Earth.

The colonies of Aerelon, Aquaria, Canneron, Caprica, Gemenon, Leonis, Libris, Picon, Sagittaron, Scorpia, Tauron, and Virgon lived in peace and prosperity at times, but clashed far more often. Even so, the march of progress reached a peak when the colonists created artificial life to serve their needs and fight in their wars. These artificial workers and soldiers were named Cylons.

The creation process was perhaps too complete. In time, the Cylons became unhappy with their lot in life. They found a will of their own and rebelled against their former masters. In twelve bloody years, the First Cylon War claimed the lives of millions. At last an armistice was declared.

The Cylons departed, supposedly for a world of their own. For forty years, the human race knew nothing of the Cylons, their plans, or their location.

The colonies settled into a period of close cooperation, forming a stable centralized government. The memories of the Cylon War began to fade. Technology that had been banned during the war was eventually brought back in the name of progress and convenience. These systems included networked computers, wireless technologies, and other electronics that were vulnerable to Cylon attack. Such “progress” was tragically shortsighted.

On the very day the last warship from the First Cylon War was to be decommissioned, the Cylons returned. Billions were killed in a matter of hours; the Cylon victory was nearly complete—humanity all but exterminated in hours. Instead of fighting, the old warship, the *Battlestar Galactica*, led a fleet of civilian ships in a desperate flight away from the hostilities.

The refugee fleet houses less than fifty thousand surviving members of the human race. All must be fed, clothed, and sheltered, traveling in ships that need upkeep and repair. Their one hope is that the end of their journey brings them to the mythical home of the Thirteenth Tribe: Earth.

ADVENTURE POSSIBILITIES

The stories told in the *Battlestar Galactica* television series are but a few of the adventures that occurred during the years after the Cylon assault. The fleet is composed of dozens of ships and tens of thousands of people—each ship a small world and culture unto itself and each person with her own tale to tell. While the story possibilities are nearly infinite, several role playing game campaign ideas come immediately to mind.

The Search For Earth

Whether you play the crew of *Galactica* or others in the fleet, this campaign model follows the primary storyline of the television series. The PCs have a long-term goal of leading (or at least helping) the fleet to safety and following the ancient guideposts of the Thirteenth Tribe leading to Earth.

Such an approach builds on the plentiful background and available characters from the TV show. A drawback is that the settings and characters might be too familiar, forcing the GM to change things in order to keep the campaign interesting. One way around this would be to avoid using the *Galactica* and its crew, and instead focus on another ship in the fleet. Such an “alternate ship”

campaign would allow the group to experience many of the main events of the show (the formation of the fleet, the destruction of the *Olympic Carrier*, the search for a water supply, etc.) from a completely different point of view. By dovetailing the plots with the main storyline from the show, the GM can create stories that intersect or ignore the established storyline as necessary for a memorable campaign.

Resistance

Humans are tough bastards, and not everyone was killed on the Twelve Colonies. On Caprica, at least, enough survivors banded together to strike back at the Cylon occupiers. Same thing might have happened elsewhere. This approach allows for a game set on a planet, not in space, and for a point of view very different from that explored on the show. An entire campaign could be set on one or more of the twelve worlds, or on an outpost of the old human civilization.

Although the characters in a resistance campaign are not confined to a ship, they are in even more danger from the Cylons than those in a space-focused storyline. Not so easy to escape into the trackless wastes of space when you are planet-bound. The themes of survival and maintaining humanity under difficult conditions are still there, but the setting is dramatically different.

On Our Own

Another campaign approach follows the basic premise of *Battlestar Galactica*, but shifts away from the *Galactica*-lead fleet. The PCs might have a mostly self-sufficient ship and must try to survive on their own. Many of the problems faced on the show can be reflected but with different characters and circumstances, and with likely very different resolutions.

Since character relationships are so important in BSG-style storytelling, it's important to make sure enough nonplayer characters exist for potential conflict, suspicion, romance, and jealousy. This could be done either with a large, passenger-laden ship, or perhaps a “mini-fleet” with several ships working in cooperation.

This type of storyline could continue indefinitely, could wind up back on the Colonies to become a resistance campaign, or could dovetail with standard adventures by meeting up with the *Galactica* and her fleet.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

The remainder of this book explains the universe of *Battlestar Galactica*, how to create characters, and how to play the game. If you are taking on the role of Game Master, the later chapters provide both guidance and resources.

Chapter One: Twelve Tribes of Kobol gives a brief overview of the history and culture of the setting, along with the few facts that are known about the Cylons. (As a point of reference, this information reflects the television series up until the latter half of the first season.) Players should read this background information to better understand both their characters and the enemy. The chapter closes with game information and a full description of the major characters from the television series.

Chapter Two: Characters describes various aspects about characters and how they are created. It also contains rules for improving an existing character.

Chapter Three: Traits & Skills details two of the major elements that help define characters. The entries also offer insight on how to play characters who possess those qualities.

Chapter Four: Rules presents the Cortex Game System. It tells you how character information actually translates into play. Everything from skill use to combat to medicine is explained in the chapter, with plenty of examples to make things clearer.

Chapter Five: Gear begins by discussing the economy of the fleet and the use of cash and barter in a society on the run from the Cylons. It explains how characters acquire personal equipment, from sidearm

to dress uniforms to specialty equipment. It wraps up with lists and game information on a slew of useful items.

Chapter Six: Vehicles offers a look at the most important machines of the *Battlestar Galactica* setting, from huge capital ships to small craft such as a Vipers, Raptors, and Cylon raiders. The chapter explains how large and small craft interact at different scales and offers more specific rules for vehicle combat.

Chapter Seven: Game Master defines the role of the game monitor/referee/facilitator. It starts with the most basic concepts, then moves on to guidelines for constructing adventures and crafting campaigns, advice on how to handle players, and methods to keep a game interesting and engaging.

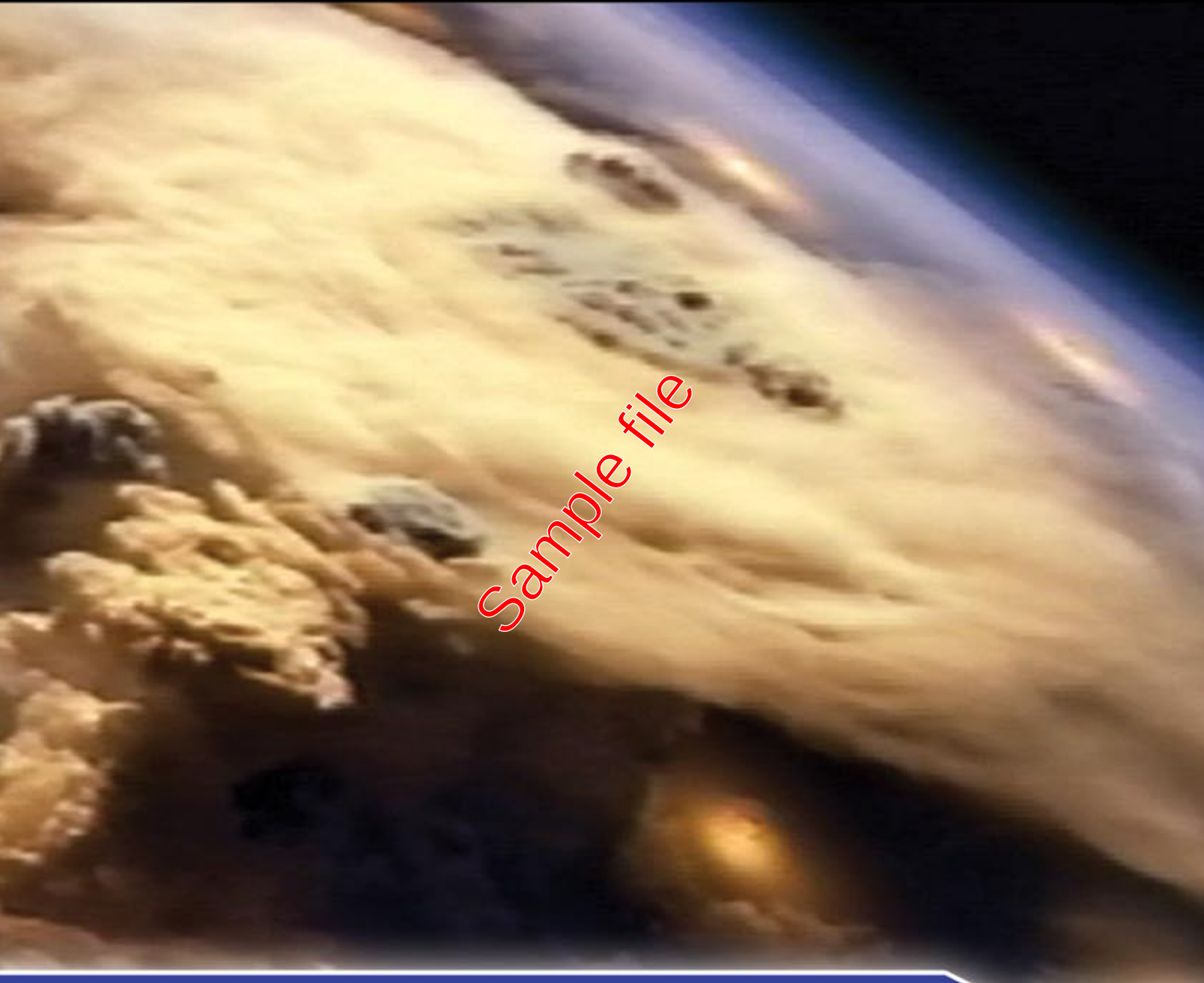
Chapter Eight: Others provides “stock” characters that can prove useful when running a BSG adventure. The chapter also provides alternate PCs for those who wish to get started quickly but do not want to play the characters from the television show.

The book closes with an **Appendix** of Colonial slang and basic military concepts and jargon. A character sheet may be photocopied for personal use only. A group of important charts and tables makes it easy to quickly find a number or die value you might need during play, while the index helps you reference the rest of the book quickly.

The universe of *Battlestar Galactica* is large enough to tell just about any story you can imagine. Just remember that danger should be faced with courage, tragedy with joy, and despair with hope. So say we all!



CHAPTER ONE



Sample file

TWELVE TRIBES OF KOBOL

COLONIAL ONE, CONFERENCE ROOM

THE Cylons have returned. They've attacked us without warning, destroyed our cities, and driven us back to the stars. We have endured the most heinous event in human history, yet we survive.

"Why?" some may ask. "Why have we been spared while billions have not?"

President Adar, gods guide his spirit, once told me of an explosion in the prison on Canceron. The destruction was massive. Passengers on a starliner leaving the south colony said they saw the blast from orbit. No one was sure what caused it. Something had ignited a tylium vein . . .

The only survivor was one of the inmates. Forty-one Colonial marines and over a thousand prisoners, all gone. The warden died as well. His name was Adam Adar. He was the President's nephew.

The outrage was immediate. The victims' families demanded to know why their loved ones were gone. Fingers were pointed. Everyone had someone to blame, but the investigation was inconclusive and no one ever learned what really happened.

All eyes were on the survivor. How had he managed to avoid the blast? Was he involved somehow? Was it a failed escape attempt? People slung wild theories and virtually all of them laid the blame squarely at the survivor's feet.

The Quorum of Twelve called a special inquiry. The people demanded it. They wanted a scapegoat. The colony representatives split down the middle, with President Adar casting the decisive vote. Adar was feeling pressure from all sides and, to be frank, the only thing keeping him from siding against the inmate was his conscience. Adar was furious. He loved Adam like a son. But to condemn a man to death without proof of his guilt . . .

That day the President received a package that Adam had sent the day before the explosion. Inside was a painting of the sun cresting Canceron's equator. Adar said it was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. Then he noticed the signature.

It was the inmate. He'd painted the piece from his cell. You might know his name: Goran, one of the greatest artists of our time. He'd trained with Monclair in the final years of his life.

Adar voted to spare Goran and as you might know, he went on to paint many more amazing things.

"Why have we survived?" Because each of us is another Goran. You might paint, or write, or cook, or just make people smile. Everyone in this fleet has something to offer. Everyone in this fleet brings a little piece of home into the stars. We survived . . . to remember.

If we don't, if we focus on the why and let it consume us, if we give in to anger and depression, the Cylons win. But if we bring our knowledge and culture to our new homes, if we honor the Lords of Kobol with our memory, if we never forget, nothing can destroy us.

—President Laura Roslin,



CRASH COURSE

All right, rooks, listen up! You're here to train with the best of who's left. As you know, we're in a world of hurt these days. The Cylons did a number on the colonies and they've been kicking our behinds across the galaxy ever since. We've lost our homes, our families, and more booze than I care to cry about, but like the President says, we're not gonna lose who we are!

There's fifty thousand of us left—Aerelons, Scorpions, Capricans, Picons, Gemenese, the rest of ya—thrown together in seventy tin cans held together with spit and hope. We may have our issues with each other, but we don't have the luxury of turning off the news anymore. We can't just sit back and watch. We have to fight to survive and we have to fight harder to find a new home. And we will find a new home. We'll find Earth. The Old Man says so.

When you're out there dodging Cylon fire, you should know who to pray to. That's where the gods come in. Listen close. We're only gonna cover this once....

LIFE HERE BEGAN OUT THERE

Growing up in the colonies, it's easy to believe that we always lived there. The tribes settled over two thousand years ago and there's been a lot of history since: the trouble at the start and the wars between the worlds. A lot of information was lost with the dead. Too little time was spent recording the past. We let our roots slip away as we focused on other things and eventually it all became myth.

The zealots regale you with stories of glorious Kobol. They speak of it like it's the Promised Land. Ambrosia for all, they say! And most believe them. Kobol wasn't just the home of the tribes, it was the home of the *gods*. Kobol was where it all started. It was the root of all culture, the forge of all technology, and the wellspring of every one of our eternal souls.

It's also where we learned to hate and kill each other.

THE LORDS OF KOBOL

Our knowledge of Kobol is sketchy. The Sacred Scrolls tell us it was the cradle of human civilization, a world of endless fruit and fancy. Rolling hills and sweeping seas, the stuff of frakking legends! The heart of it all was the City of the Gods, where Zeus,

Ares, Aphrodite, Hera, and the other gods lived in harmony with the tribes. The people enjoyed the finest in art and explored the limits

of science. They built the famous Forum, Temple, and Opera House, which we tried to copy in Delphi on Caprica. Did we succeed? Well, that's one for the critics.

Some people devoted themselves entirely to the gods and began calling themselves oracles. They became the spiritual leaders of the tribes and remain our spiritual leaders today. If you believe the scripture, the gods gifted the oracles with the power of prophecy and this led to the Sacred Scrolls. These were the collected writings of all the oracles, in particular Pythia, who wrote about the cycle of time. She foresaw a coming darkness and said that it would consume humanity over and over again. With each cycle, the people would be exiled or flee their home to be reborn elsewhere. That was 3,600 years ago and given what's happened since, it's hard to ignore the possibility that she was right.

The first time of darkness came two thousand years ago when one of the Lords—no one's really sure which—made a jealous play to rule the rest. At least that's what we *think* happened; remember, our intel here is sketchy. This troublemaker called down a great blaze from the heavens and the other Lords were powerless against it.

The next part, for once, is pretty well documented. To escape the onslaught, a number of Lords and a bunch of people boarded a vessel called the *Galleon* and fled into space. Hera, queen of the gods, was so overwhelmed by grief as she watched the *Galleon* leave that she threw herself from a high mountain. Zeus was enraged at her death and screamed to the heavens that any who returned to Kobol would pay a price in blood. How the folks aboard that ship heard Zeus' words is just one of those things the oracles tell us we got to take on faith.

However it was that they heard it, the tribes heeded the warning and never came back. They ventured into the deep black, in time finding twelve habitable worlds orbiting a single sun. If you've read your history, you know that didn't work out so well....

THE TWELVE COLONIES

The planets that the tribes settled eventually became the Twelve Colonies we know today. That didn't happen without some rough patches though. Leaving Kobol so unexpectedly, the colonists brought little with them. Worse, their anger and confusion over the gods' selfish conflict caused rifts. The people neglected, even rejected, their past and found ways to separate themselves rather than bind together. Hot and cold civil wars began and the colonists entered

a dark age that stalled or reversed much of their progress. This continued for many hundreds of years.

The resident Lords of Kobol, still riled up by the events at their home world, didn't do much to help matters. Many actually fought and died in battle. Others turned their backs on their children, leaving them to their folly. Precious few tried to make peace. One way or another, by the time the wars ran their course, the gods no longer walked among the tribes.

Getting humankind back on its feet was no picnic. There was no shortage of problems. Survivors were scattered and fearful of their neighbors. Tempers remained high, making it difficult for the colonies to work together. Much knowledge was lost in the fighting. Infrastructure was destroyed, or had never existed in the first place. Efforts on every front were stymied: agriculture, industry, research, rediscovery.

In the end, the tribes got their act together and began to move forward. Open warfare and destruction waned, but that didn't eliminate the conflict. Each of the Twelve Colonies developed their own identities and some were just better than others. Worlds flush with natural resources pulled ahead, seizing positions as the cultural leaders of the system. The fruitless worlds had it the worst, their peoples limited to menial labor and curtailed learning. To some people's delight and other's disgust, these roles stuck. Colonials were defined mostly by where they were born. Truth to tell, this sad state of affairs hasn't changed much since.

The peace also brought progress, though travel and communication between the worlds became easier. Industry and education took center stage. Colonies traded resources, products, and services, and started defining value in the post-war era. A cross-planet colonial economy developed. The official currency of the Twelve Colonies, the cubit, was introduced. That could easily have gone badly, but somehow the leaders of the systems' fledgling governments refrained from disputing the cost of potatoes over the barrels of their guns. It looked like things were finally settling down again. Some started saying that the whole cycle of time thing was behind us.

The colonies turned their attention to space again. They built observatories and explored the edges of their new home. They built listening stations and pointed them up to see if anyone was talking, but the skies were silent. They built fleets of new ships to venture back out into the deep black. Yeah, there was a point—mind you, it was brief—where it looked like it the colonies would build a lasting peace. Didn't last, though. It never does.

The next time of darkness came on the colonies slowly. It started with two seemingly unrelated events. First was the gradual breakdown of the peace. Old prejudices and new arguments clouded the politics of the day. No single thing set it all off. None of it was particularly new, either. The poor colonies wanted more from the rich. The small planets wanted space on the large worlds. Debates about prices got heated and then shut down altogether. Practical disputes gave way to personal biases and the old hatreds resurfaced.

The second round of civil wars was far more subdued. The fighting was mostly restricted to border moons and backwash parts of the core worlds. That way it couldn't interfere with the comfortable daily lives of the wealthy and influential. Gods forbid the frakking ingrates sending men off to war actually watch them die. The blood on their hands might have stained their pretty clothes. No, while the grunts were smearing themselves across the system, the leaders of the colonies were focused on more and more imaginative ways to avoid an honest day's work.

That's where the real kicker comes in. Against all common sense, those bastards did the impossible, the unimaginable. Fifty years ago, they created life. Worse, they created *slaves*.

The Cylons were meant to help us. They were stronger, faster. They could go places we couldn't and do things we wouldn't. They could work forever and they never asked for a wage or better conditions or even a hot meal. They could even fight our wars, absolving us of our guilt over the fallen. The Cylons were the perfect solution for a civilization consumed with cozy efficiency.

The eggheads pushed Cylon development and reaped billions doing so. They gave the robots advanced processing capabilities and logic systems. More and more elaborate software was designed. In time, the Cylons became *aware*. Must have taken a hard look at their existence.

Big surprise, they didn't like it.

THE FIRST CYLON WAR

The First Cylon War was just the "Cylon War" in the history books that came before the holocaust. It lasted twelve years and knocked the piss out of the Twelve Colonies. Battles were fought across the system, on the colonies, and in space around them. It was clear from the outset that the eggheads hadn't just given the toasters the ability to think, they'd stupidly given them the ability to hate. Reports from all theaters spoke of the Cylons' horrifying ferocity. They killed without mercy, leaving