



Final Flight - Flashbacks

The following are a series of vignettes regarding Starbuck's experiences on Earth. Please read Final Flight before reading these stories.

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Note: for clarity and the sanity of the author narrative use of dimensions will be in the metric (SI) system.

BobDL

Battlestar Galactica Final Flight-Flashbacks

"Carry on my wayward son, There'll be peace when you are done. Lay your weary head to rest, Now don't you cry no more." Kansas

Chapter 1 - Friday, 4 May 1979

Two Colonial Vipers sped through space on a long range patrol. They

had been launched from the Battlestar Galactica a short time ago and had just cleared the vicinity of the Fleet. The two ships were on a long range mission to patrol the space trailing the Rag Tag Fleet as the human survivors from the Colonies fled from the scene of a recent battle between the Galactica and a lone Cylon baseship. "Starbuck," Captain Apollo called over his radio to his wingman. "This is a long mission. We'll need to conserve our support systems. Activate your cryo-sleep system and set it to release you in six centares." "Activating cryo-sleep system, see you in six." The cryo-sleep systems on both ships released their knockout gasses and, after the pilots were asleep, reduced the temperatures on board to a few degrees above absolute zero. Later, Starbuck slowly woke up from his cryo-sleep with more than the normal amount of disorientation. Why is it so bright? He could see strong lights shining through his closed eyelids. Then he

noticed that he was not in the same position he would be if he was still in his Viper, instead he was lying flat. He flicked his eyes open and was immediately dazzled by the glare from the brightly lit white room he was in. Where am I? He propped himself up on his elbows and looked around with watering eyes. First he saw that he was lying on a waist high platform and then he saw several figures standing around him dressed in white robes with indistinguishable faces. Suddenly the disorientation wore off, Starbuck realized where he was. "Welcome, Starbuck," one of the figures spoke with a familiar voice. "Uh ... Hi," Starbuck replied cautiously while swinging his legs over the edge of the platform he was on to be more comfortable. "You're John right? So, why am I here," he asked. "Where is Apollo?" "Yes, you may call me John. Your friend is safe. Observe." John turned away from Starbuck and waved a hand at one of the walls which immediately showed a meter square image of a Viper. The image moved closer to the cockpit and a cryo-sleeping Apollo could then be seen. "So, he is ok then. But, you still haven't told me why I am here." "Not long ago, by your reckoning, you and Apollo assisted us in the preservation of life on the planet Terra. We require your assistance again." "Are the Terrans going to fight another war," Starbuck asked. "No, the Terrans are safe at this moment. We need your assistance on another planet." "Which one," Starbuck asked. "Earth," John said. "Earth," Starbuck asked with both bewilderment and excitement. "Yes, Earth. Let me explain. For reasons that we will not go into now, the people on Earth are not as technically capable as yours are. Also, our opponent, despite his restrictions, will ensure that your enemy will follow your fleet to Earth. With the forces they have available, all human life on Earth will end." "So, why do you need me?" "We want to send you to Earth to prepare them for the coming of your fleet and the Cylons. However, you are not to alter the natural course of events on Earth." Starbuck instantly saw the contradiction in the angel's statement. "I don't see how that is possible. If the Earth is to be made ready then I will have to introduce Colonial technology to them. But, if I introduce this technology, then their cultures will be altered." "This requirement is not to be violated. You will find a way to do this. If events had unfolded as they should have long ago. The Cylons would never exist nor would your people and those on Earth contact each other until a parity of abilities had been reached. That is why you are not to alter the natural course of events on Earth. However, you will have sufficient time to create a force capable of defending the Earth. While we can be at the Earth in an instant, your fleet will take 25 yahren to get there." "What! Twenty five yahren," Starbuck exclaimed. "The Fleet is my home! I have people there that need me!" "We are aware of that. We are also aware of your relationship with the woman, Cassiopeia. Yet, you are the best candidate for this task." "Would you care to explain why, and why not pick somebody else?" "Starbuck, you are an orphan. That means that you have no family ties and you have learned to be resourceful. You are also charismatic and persuasive which will be helpful in forming a team on

Earth to help you in this task. You are also an excellent fighter pilot with a strong sense of duty, much stronger than many of your fellow pilots. Your ship contains all the technology needed to defend the Earth from your enemies. "We looked at other candidates. Your friend Apollo is eminently suited for this task and he would do it willingly. His sense of duty is very strong, like yours. Yet, he is your commander's son and in the chain of command of your fleet. He also has family ties; a son, father, and sister. We cannot allow him to choose to abandon his family. "Your other fellow pilots are not suitable because they lack your ability to reason outside the range of normal thought and to try new methods. Also, some of your fellow pilots will not fit in well and would not easily gain the respect needed from the people on Earth to accomplish this mission." "You really think I am the best person then." "Yes, we do Starbuck." Starbuck's shoulders slumped as he sat on the platform and thought about Cassiopeia. He had recently considered taking their relationship forward, especially after seeing her reaction to his going on the recent sabotage mission against the Cylon baseship. Then he shook his head as if he was clearing out unpleasant thoughts. "Other opportunities will become available on Earth," one of the other angels said after reading his mind. Starbuck looked around with alarm. They can read my mind, he thought. Well, they must know everything then. "We know what is in your heart, and how you have chosen. Behold." John waved his arm again toward the wall and the image of Apollo disappeared and a planet appeared. To Starbuck it greatly resembled his home planet, Caprica, but he quickly realized that it was the Earth. "We will tell you that the 13th Tribe of Kobol did indeed travel to the Earth. They left behind some things that you will find useful for your task. Primarily, they left behind a base on Earth's moon that you can easily convert to your purpose. Other things you will find useful are inside the base. Your knowledge of Earth's solar system is as you have discovered from your ancient documents. There are nine planets, most of which have moons. There is also a field of asteroids between the fourth and fifth planets. The Earth is a divided planet. It is filled with many nations and states that constantly war with each other. Yet, the people of one of these nations are the most able to help you in your task. They live in this region." Again John waved his arm towards the image. This time, the image of the earth unwrapped to form a flat map. Starbuck could clearly see the major land masses. An area encompassing the middle third of a triangular land mass in the northern half of the map appeared. "This region on Earth is the land of a nation whose people are most capable of helping you in your task. They are the only nation that is capable of space flight beyond their planet. With your permission we can give more information about this nation and the ability to speak their language." "Go ahead," Starbuck said. "Prepare yourself," the angel closest to Starbuck said while raising his hand. Then he touched Starbuck gently on the forehead. Starbuck immediately felt dizzy and almost fell back onto the platform so disorientating the rush of information was. It

took him a moment to recover his bearings. "We have refueled your ship and we will release you near certain asteroids in Earth's solar system that you should make note of for the future. They may also be helpful to you. Farewell, Starbuck, and thank you. We will contact you occasionally as the need arises." John then raised his hand in farewell. Starbuck then blacked out and collapsed back onto the platform he was sitting on.

Chapter 2 - Friday, 4 May 1979

Starbuck slowly woke up from his cryo-sleep with more than the

normal amount of disorientation and he had a terrible headache. "Ugghh," he moaned with the pain. I haven't felt this bad since the last time I got drunk with Jolly on grog. When he was able, he opened his eyes and looked out his Viper's cockpit windows. Where's Apollo? Then the realization hit him. Apollo is twenty five yahrens away and so is Cassie! "Ugghh," he moaned again, this time sadness and loneliness mixed with his pain. He slowly checked his ship's status and noticed that his fuel cells were full and that all his systems were functioning properly. After that, he made a quick long range scan of the solar system he was in and confirmed that he was indeed in Earth's solar system and that he was on course toward Earth and would arrive there in two hours at a quarter of light speed. Finally, he reached for his med kit which was stowed under his seat. He opened the kit and took a couple of mild pain reliever tablets with a sip of water and closed his eyes until they took hold. Several minutes later the proximity alarm, which signifies that a hazard has been detected by his navigation scanner, went off. The noise made Starbuck groan once more. After switching off the alarm, Starbuck looked down at his display screen and noticed that he was approaching some asteroids. Well, they said I should pay attention to these rocks. So, let's see what they are made of. Starbuck set his scanner from low power navigation mode to high power and scanned the asteroids that were ahead of him. The first one was just a rock. But the second, several thousand kilometers from the first made his mouth water. Well, how about that, he thought with an avaricious grin while looking at his scanner read out. He quickly recorded the orbital characteristics of the asteroid so he could find it later. Further on, just entering scanner range was another asteroid. Starbuck flew towards it for a few minutes and when it got closer his scanner could make a detailed reading on it. That is one big rock, he thought. It's Over 900 metrics in diameter! Then his scanner picked up the subsurface composition. Tylum! That's good to know too! He quickly recorded this asteroid's orbital characteristics too. Minutes later he was out of the asteroid field. Almost two hours of boring flight

later Starbuck approached Earth and its moon. They said that there is a base on Earth's moon. Well, let's go look. Starbuck decelerated and changed course to over fly the moon. Again, he switched his scanner from its low power mode to high power. He flew a series of orbits of the moon. On his first pass he noted the landing sites of several primitive missions that his newly acquired memories told him were from the landings that took place a few years ago. On his third pass the Thirteenth Tribe's moon base showed up on his screen. It appeared to be a roofed over crater five kilometers in diameter. It was located close to the edge of the moon as seen from Earth. As he got closer more details appeared on his display screen. He recorded as much as he could into his onboard computer's memory then the base passed out of view. I wish I could land there, he thought. I need a shuttle, not a Viper. I don't have the equipment to reopen the base. Starbuck completed his last orbit of the moon, recording a surface map as he went before boosting out of orbit and setting course for the Earth. He examined his new knowledge and thought about where he should land. They are so paranoid down there, he thought, and I don't want to cause a commotion. A sparsely populated area it is then, but which? Fifteen minutes later Starbuck entered orbit around the Earth. The first thing he noticed was that it was night over the nation that the angels suggested he get help from. Starbuck thought long and hard about where he would set down. His new knowledge did not help him decide. All it did was increase the possible areas. Things that he considered as he rode in Earth orbit twice were of course the number and types of people in each area, the manufacturing ability of each area, the terrain of each area, the natural resources of each area, and other factors. He scanned the Earth for Tylum and noticed that it was there but it was so spread out and diffuse that it was not practical to mine it. Starbuck also made a detailed scan of his landing region's terrain to fill in the details of the knowledge he was given. After examining the read out of the scan for another orbit he finally made up his mind where to land and started his landing procedures.

The Davis family owned and operated a sugar beet farm in Montana.

The 5,000 acre farm in the south central section of the state had been in the Davis family for three generations. The semi-retired patriarch, Michael Davis, owned and helped worked the farm. Ron, the oldest son, mostly ran the day to day business of the farm. Ron, his wife and three children, two boys and a girl, and his parents lived together in the farm's big house. Ron's brother, Mark, worked in Billings as a plumber. Ron was a tall, rugged looking Navy veteran of two tours of Viet Nam as

an aircraft (jet engine) mechanic on the USS Kitty Hawk. He had wavy blond hair and strong shoulders. He left the service to help his father on the farm. He joined the Navy Reserve as he had served two tours and wanted to earn his retirement. It was an early spring weekend and Ron had taken his family out to the Rocky Mountains to go camping and fishing for trout in the pure mountain streams. While Ron, fished his family stayed in a travel trailer parked not far off a logging access road. This allowed the children a chance to play. It was evening and time for dinner and Ron was about to give thanks for the family's meal when he heard the characteristic whine of a jet powered aircraft fly close overhead. "That's way too low," he commented to all there. He got a nod of agreement from his wife while his two young sons looked up at the roof of the trailer. Ron didn't bother looking out a window since the whole area was socked in with low lying clouds and fog. Ron was half expecting to hear a crash, the airplane was flying so low, but they didn't hear one. The sound quickly diminished and Ron dismissed the noise from his mind. The next morning at sunrise Ron quickly dressed and set out for an early morning fishing attempt. A little while later, the rest of his family rose from their sleep and started their day. With the usual gripes a family has in the morning, they were dressed and fed. After a few table games the boys tired of being in the trailer and begged their mother to go outside and play on the hills nearby. The daughter, Shannon, was only two years old and was too young to play outside without adult supervision. The mother, Carly, a green eyed, wavy haired redhead, agreed but told them, "Don't go too far. We're going to have lunch soon." "Don't worry, Mom," the oldest boy, Scott, yelled back as he and his brother Frank ran towards a hill not too far away. The boys then trudged to the top of the hill and looked down into a small valley. It was a hundred meters wide by five hundred meters long. There were only a few trees taller than a half meter on the side of the ridge they were standing on and in the valley, though the other three sides of the valley the trees stood thickly. After descending to the valley floor Scott sat down on the stump and looked around the small valley. He saw what appeared to be tire tracks through the grass going down the middle of the field. The grass near the tracks also appeared to be slightly burnt. He got up and walked over to the tracks and noticed that they didn't look like any tire tracks he had ever seen. Frank came over and asked, "Whatcha looking at, Scotty?" "My name is Scott," he said angrily over his shoulder. "How many times do I have to tell you that?" "Okaaaay," Frank replied with sarcasm as he stopped beside his older brother next to the tracks in the grass. "What are those," he asked. "Some weird tire tracks," Scott replied while stepping into one of the tracks and starting to follow it. Frank fell into step next to him. Both boys quickly realized that the tracks stopped suddenly in the middle of the valley and both turned to follow them the other way. They followed the tracks all the way to the end of the valley and to the edge of the forest. They lost the tracks from the lack of grass on the ground beneath the trees. "Where did it go,"

the younger boy asked. "I don't know," Scott answered while walking and looking ahead. A few steps into the forest the older boy stopped suddenly and said, "Ssshh." Then he pointed at something further into the forest. Both boys could barely see a man cutting branches from nearby trees and draping them over what looked like a jet fighter plane. They could also see that he was armed with a bulky pistol. I've never seen a jet like that, Scott thought to himself while standing and watching the lone figure twenty meters ahead of him. The pilot paused to review his recent work and leaned against one of the short wings of his plane. Then he caught sight of the two boys. "Hello...children," he said as if unsure which words to use in English. He then took a cigar out of his inside jacket pocket, stuck it in his mouth and lit it with a lighter. Scott took a few steps towards the aircraft and asked quickly with excitement, "Hello Mister. Are you in the Air Force? What kind of airplane is that and why did you land here and not at the airport?" "Well, it's called a Viper and I would get into trouble if I landed at the airport," the pilot replied with more confidence in the language. "I'm not from around here. Nor am I in the Air Force. My name is Starbuck." "I'm Scott and this is Frankie," the oldest boy replied. "You must be a Russian then." "No, I'm not a Russian either. Like I said, I'm not from around here." The boys continued to look over the pilot, his equipment, and his airplane while Starbuck thought for a second. "Are you boys from the small dwelling over the hill," he asked. "That's not our house, it's our trailer," Frank replied with a giggle. Starbuck thought about that for a second, processing the difference between a house and a trailer then said, "Can you take me there so I can talk to your parents?" "Sure," Scott replied. "Follow me." Starbuck followed the boys over the hill. Since it was almost noon, Carly was preparing lunch. She was about to call for the boys when she saw them coming back down the hill they had earlier climbed. Then she saw the man following her children. She stopped her lunch preparations, opened the door, and stepped out to find out what was going on. Her daughter stayed inside the trailer, she was playing with one of her toys. "Hello there, what can I do for you," She asked. Starbuck stopped in his tracks while the boys continued towards the trailer. "Mom," Scott said. "This is an Air Force pilot. He landed his airplane on the other side of the hill." With a skeptical look Carly said, "Sure boys. Get inside and wash up for lunch." She could see that he wasn't wearing a standard Air Force uniform. With dejected expressions the boys went inside. Starbuck tried one of his trademark smiles. The woman in front of him was quite striking. Red hair in the Colonies was unheard of. "Hello, I'm sorry I upset you. My name is Starbuck." Carly's skeptical expression remained. She was about to say something more to the man. But, she heard a noise down the logging road. She turned her head and saw that it was her husband returning. "Well, like I told your children, I'm not from around here and I need your help." As Ron approached the trailer with a basket full of trout he had just caught, he saw his wife talking to a strange man in some kind of uniform. It vaguely resembled a

park ranger's uniform. "What's going on here," he asked as he joined his wife. Ron could now see that the strange man was armed with a pistol and that his uniform was definitely not a park ranger's uniform. Ron put his gear on the ground and unzipped his jacket so he could reach his own pistol, hidden in a shoulder holster, if needed. "Again, I'm not from here and I need your help." "The boys said they found him over the hill and that he landed a fighter plane there. They think he is an Air Force pilot." "We'll see about that," Ron said warily. "So, where are you really from then, Russia?" What is it about these Russians, Starbuck thought. He knew that he would have to trust these people if he was to start fulfilling his mission. He drew himself fully erect, to a position of attention, and said. "My name is Lieutenant Starbuck of the Colonial Fleet. I am from the planet Caprica which is in another galaxy, and again, I really need your help." Both Ron and Carly chuckled at Starbuck's answer. "Really now," Ron replied. "I think I'll just take you to the Sheriff." Starbuck's shoulders slumped and he looked down at the ground. "Please, don't do that. You can't tell the authorities about me. My presence here has to be a secret. Or at least that is what I've been told. I'll prove it to you who I am." Ron and Carly exchanged another skeptical glance. "Just how are you going to do that," Ron asked. "Just follow me," Starbuck replied and turned to walk back over the hill he came down from. Later, Ron instantly became convinced of Starbuck's sincerity when Starbuck blew up a tree with his ship's lasers. No military force in the world had a weapon like that. Sure, they had lasers that powerful, but not in such a small package. After the demonstration Starbuck explained everything he could about the situation he was in, what happened to the Colonies, why and how he was on Earth, and what he was to accomplish. Ron then invited Starbuck to fly his ship to his farm that night where it could be concealed. When he and his family arrived home early, his father, Michael, became concerned that something was wrong. He told his father what he knew about Starbuck and that he had promised to help him as much as he could. His father, Richard, remained skeptical until after Starbuck landed in the middle of the night and the three men hurried to conceal the Viper in the barn. That night Ron lay in bed trying to sleep. His mind was still racing so much that he could not have slept if he wanted to. What a crazy world we live in! Crime, drugs and immorality are on the increase, especially in the cities. Roosevelt's and Johnson's social programs sure didn't do any good; then at the same time they open the flood gates to immigrants, that's a sure way to bankrupt the country and destroy our culture. We're in a Cold War with the Russians and the Vietnamese Communists, whom I went to war against, are marching into Cambodia. Now we have more refugees to take care of, as if the Boat People weren't enough. If we had just won the war in Nam we wouldn't have this problem. The idiot president and the rest of the politicians give away the Panama Canal then they put the economy in the tank. Meanwhile, the industrialists are shutting down Detroit and the steel mills while they increase their

wealth by sending the jobs to Canada and Asia and Three Mile Island just about blows up. The Shah of Iran flees from the radical Muslims while the rest of them put an oil embargo on us. The End Times must really be approaching. And now, right out of a science fiction movie, a space fighter pilot shows up with word that alien war machines are going to attack Earth in 25 years. Who knows what else will happen? Oh God, what do I do?

Chapter 3 - Saturday 5 May 1979 - Early morning

Starbuck was sleeping soundly in the Davis' guest bedroom.
An hour

ago he had landed his Viper on the Davis's farm. Ron had hooked a chain to it and towed it into his barn with his tractor. Starbuck was so exhausted from the last couple days of activity that as soon as he crawled into his bed he fell asleep. His dreams that night were the normal mish-mash of different events of his life. They were gently interrupted by a man's voice. "Starbuck," John said. "Our future communications with you will be by this method. When you wake in the morning you will remember our conversation. Do not fear the cautious attitude of the Davis family. God has directed you to them. They will do what is necessary to ensure the success of your mission. Trust them and learn from them and their friends and co-workers." After John's message, Starbuck returned to his dreams and his sleep was a bit more restfully than normal and he woke exceptionally refreshed in the morning.

Sunday 6 May 1979 -Afternoon

Starbuck stood out on the front porch of the Davis home
smoking one

of his new cigars and relishing in the fresh flavor. No one in the Davis family smoked and Carly had strongly insisted that Starbuck smoke outside only. Still, Starbuck enjoyed being outside after being cooped up on the Galactica for so long. The pleasant spring evening air was also a refreshing change to what he had breathed on the Galactica. These sure are better than the dried up, musty fumarells I had back on the Galactica, he thought while taking another pleasure full drag on his cigar. He didn't know that they were the cheapest cigars Carly could find. Earlier that day, while Starbuck slept in, Carly took her children to town for church services; Ron had remained home to watch over Starbuck. Afterwards,

she stopped at a couple of the town's stores and bought some clothes and a box of cigars for Starbuck. He was now wearing a plaid, flannel shirt, blue jeans and a pair of work boots. Starbuck then saw a vehicle approach the Davis farm. He could see that it was a pickup truck so favored by the local farmers. He appreciated the utility of such a vehicle. They must be Mr. Davis family. There's a family meeting tonight. While keeping his lit cigar well outside, Starbuck opened the front door of the house and called inside loudly, "There's someone coming. They're in a brown pickup. It's probably your brother." "I'll be right out," Ron replied from the living room. Moments later both the pickup stopped in front of the house and Ron Davis stepped outside and joined Starbuck on the porch. A man and woman exited the pickup, extracted their young daughter from the safety seat and walked together up to the house. "Hey, Mark, Julie," Ron called out as they walked up to the porch. "Come on in." "You must be Mr. Starbuck," Mark stated flatly. Starbuck returned Mark's skeptical look by flashing Mark and his wife with his trademark grin. He then transferred his cigar to his left hand while offering his right and said, "That's me. I'm pleased to meet you. You must be Ron's brother Mark." Mark shook Starbuck's hand and said, "Correct and likewise. This is my wife, Julie, and this is little Denise." While Starbuck shook hands with Julie Davis, Ron said, "Let's go in and get things started." Ron led the group to the living room where his wife and his parents were already seated. Ron's children were in their rooms doing their school homework. "I don't want to be too formal with this meeting," Michael, Ron father, began. "However, we need to make some decisions and I wanted the best advice aired before we make them. Mark, I told you that Starbuck was a guest here, but what I didn't tell you was how far away from home he was. Starbuck would you like to give everyone the run-down on your situation." "Sure," he replied and started into a speech on who he was, where he was from, and why he was on Earth. "Now wait just a minute," Mark objected strongly after the first few sentences. "I can't believe you all fell for this cockamamie story." Ron then rose to his feet and walked to the front door. "Come with me, then," he said while going outside. "Where're we going?" "The barn," Ron said to his younger brother. "It's in the barn." "What is?" "Just go look." Mark walked the remaining distance to the barn went inside while Ron remained standing outside. Five minutes passed so Ron followed his brother into the barn. There he saw Mark standing on one of the wings of Starbuck's Viper. He had one of the engine access panels open and was staring at the workings of the engine. So," Ron said. "What do you think now?" "I've never seen anything like it," Mark replied. "This is either the most elaborate movie prop ever devised or Starbuck was actually telling the truth." "Do you have any idea how his engines work," Ron asked. "Nope, and I served on nuclear submarines as a reactor technician." "I couldn't make any heads or tails of it either. It's nothing like a jet engine. Come on back to the house." Mark closed the access cover and jumped down from the Viper's wing. Both men then walked back

to the house, went inside, and took their seats with their family. "Starbuck," Mark said. "I'm sorry I was so skeptical earlier. It's just that your story is so fantastic. "That's alright," Starbuck replied with a smile and chuckle. "It's hard for me to believe that I am actually here on Earth." "Starbuck, can you finish your story please," Mark asked. "Sure," he replied and finished his speech. He ended it by saying, "The beings on the Ship of Lights, I really don't know if they are angels or aliens, made it very clear to me that whatever we do there is to be no impact to Earth's culture or development," Starbuck concluded. "We are to keep our activities secret." "Thank you, Starbuck," Michael said after Starbuck finished. "So, you see what we have before us." Ron was the first to speak after the momentary silence. "It seems that God has given us an important mission to accomplish, a mission more important than anything else in which we are involved in our lives. We have a responsibility and an opportunity that no one else on Earth has. Our first responsibility is the same as that given by the angels, or whoever those beings are, to not let the majority of Earth's peoples find out what is going on." "First we should discuss what resources we have," Michael said. "Obviously we have ourselves. We all have experience farming of course. Ron and Mark also have their Navy experience, Ron as a jet engine mechanic and Mark as a nuclear technician. You girls are also helpful in business administration; Carly by helping with the farm's books and Julie helping to run your contracting business." "We are going to need more people than us," Patrick said. "That's right," Ron said. "We are going to need to create an entire space navy from scratch, and we have about twenty five years to do it in." "Not from scratch," Starbuck interjected. "We have the resources of the moon base and certain asteroids. That base is huge and I have no idea what the 13th Tribe left behind in there. We also have my Viper. From it you can learn the basics of Colonial technology. Viper engines are different only in scale from the engines on our warships. Also, my Viper's weapons are also about the same as those on our warships. You don't have to develop these technologies on your own. Just copy and adapt what I have brought to you." "That still leaves the issue of people," Michael said. "We will be creating an independent community on the Moon. All aspects of an independent economy will have to be created. Food will need to be produced and manufacturing facilities set up. Though, it seems that housing may already exist." "Judging from my experience on the Kitty Hawk," Ron added. "We will need everything from cooks, to technicians, engineers from all fields, administrators, combat pilots, and naval strategists. We are also going to need a lot of money." There was a momentary pause in the conversation as the Davis family realized the giant size of the task they were undertaking. The Davis family, while not poor, was not especially well off either. They also did not know many people outside their community and their church, which were mostly the same kinds of people. "Funds should not be a problem," Starbuck said after a moment of thought. "I scanned a certain asteroid in your system that should

provide the funds we need to finance the whole undertaking." "An asteroid," Carly asked. "Isn't that a big rock in space?" "Yep," Starbuck replied. "But this one is more than just a rock. My scanner showed that over forty percent of the mass of this rock, which is about a quarter of one of your miles in diameter, is composed of gold, silver and platinum." "A solid gold asteroid," Patrick quipped. A nervous yet happy chuckle erupted in the room. Then the room fell quiet again. "Ok, I'll be the first to breach the subject," Mark finally spoke in a quiet voice. "What kind of people do we want to recruit for this project?" He stared down at his feet when he said this. "What do you mean what kind? We need engineers, machinists, doctors, pilots, miners, and all kinds of other specialties." Ron's father replied. "That's right, but you don't get what I'm trying to say," Mark replied with determination while raising his head and looking his father in the eye. "Let me ask you this. Do we need what happened to Ron on the Kitty Hawk in '72 or what happened in Watts happening on the Moon?" Everyone in the room but Starbuck visibly shuddered. "I don't suppose that would be a good thing." Ron said. "What are the Kitty Hawk and Watts," Starbuck asked. "As a Christian is shames me to say this," Mark said partly ignoring Starbuck. "But, I think it is necessary to be exceptionally selective of who we recruit. Our mission is more important than the sensibilities of those here that would feel that their rights are being violated. We want as unified a group as possible. It's sad that people here on Earth have not been able to overcome their differences. Those differences make the world an interesting place, yet they also are one of the main sources of division amongst us. For that we can also blame greed, lust, differences in religion, and modern transportation for this problem and these problems will continue to exist until Christ returns to rule the Earth. I pray for that time to come soon." "Amen," Michael said to nods from his family and a look of bewilderment from Starbuck. "Watts," Julie explained for Starbuck's benefit, "is a district of the city of Los Angeles. The black residents there had rioted and destroyed their own homes and businesses over a small incident between the local law enforcement officials and bystanders that had to be put down by thousands of police and military soldiers." She turned to her brother in law. "But, what happened on the Kitty Hawk." "When I was serving onboard the Kitty Hawk, a navy aircraft carrier, in '72," Ron said while looking at Starbuck, "about a hundred blacks rioted and rampaged throughout the ship beating up white sailors. They thought that someone was out to kill them so they went about saying they were going to kill whites. Where they got that idea from I have no idea. They didn't mess with me," Ron said with a little pride. He was a big guy. "The XO, the second in command, who was black, was able to calm them down. You're right, Mark; we don't need that kind of crap, not even a hint of it, in our group. It's better to be exclusive, especially when we are dealing with creating a force that would have the power to devastate the Earth." "I also think that we should recruit from within our own particular faith and in general from other Protestants," Mark went on. "We

Americans can overlook most religious differences; it's built into our culture and laws. Yet, our faiths should be similar enough so that they will not divide us." Then he raised his voice. "Internal division is what will end our project and allow the alien machines to destroy us." In a normal tone of voice he continued. "We need people that will be dedicated to the project of defending the Earth without telling anyone outside the team. This will be a difficult secret to keep and I am not sure that the members of certain faiths can keep that kind of secret." So, they are limiting their group to their own tribe and sect, Starbuck thought. Their reasons appear to be valid. The information John gave me agrees with their reasoning. The Earth IS messed up. It took a long time for the Colonies to get past the worst part of their tribal rivalries. It will take even more for the Earth to do so. No wonder John warned me to keep our activities secret. If my presence here and Colonial technology were to become public knowledge then wars could start. At least the Davis family is acting rationally. These Americans, or at least the Davis', are almost as strong in their faith as the Adama family. But, they aren't fanatical like the Artori sect of the Gemoni. The Davis' are smart reasonable people. John said to trust them and I will. "Other social ills could damage our group," Carly said. "Drugs, greed, lust for power. I will pray that God will help us to bring in people who will not be driven by these things. Like you said, the job is more important than petty human bickering, in fact the fate of all life is at stake." "And that just about sums it up," Michael concluded.

After the meeting broke up the Davis family went to the kitchen to

prepare and eat their dinner. Conversation rotated around various topics except the mission Starbuck was given. Though, another issue regarding Starbuck was soon addressed. "What are we going to call you," Carly asked after taking a sip of water. "Starbuck is not a common name on Earth. In fact it is the name given to a character in a famous play called the Rain Maker." "Well, I don't know," Starbuck said with a sheepish look. "I like my name." "If you are going to do things on Earth we need to come up with a fake ID for you." "Starbuck...Buck..." Ron said. Then both Ron's and Carly's faces lit up. "Yes, but that will be corny too," Julie said. "Still, it's appropriate," Ron said. "What is?" Starbuck asked with a little exasperation. "William Rogers," Ron and Carly said in unison. "You can go by Will or Bill when you are with people you know." "Yeah, calling you Buck would be too obvious," Carly said with a giggle. Starbuck just stood there bewildered. He swore to himself to find out who this Buck Rodgers person was, fast.

Chapter 4

Sunday 1 July 1979

Starbuck felt uncomfortable in the formal suit that he wore. The

collar was too tight and the shoes hurt his feet. He had seen Ron Davis preparing for his church meetings in previous weeks and from watching television shows. However, he never thought that he would actually be wearing a suit himself. Starbuck sat in the passenger seat of Ron's truck as Ron drove his pickup towards the local church the Davis family attended. A short distance behind was the rest of Ron's family riding in Carly's station wagon. The rough road they were driving on didn't help Starbuck feel any more comfortable. I really never was a religious man, Starbuck thought to himself. I can't believe that I let the Davis's persuade me to come here. I'd rather be making a run to the asteroid for a load of gold. In the month and a half Starbuck had been on Earth he had made a weekly trip to the solid gold asteroid to grab as much loose precious metal bearing ore he could stuff into his Viper's small storage compartment. He had to wear his emergency environmental suit from his survival kit during these flights which made flying much more difficult than normal. The Davis's farm abutted a series of hills and Ron had set up a fake mine there to explain where the ore came from to the assayers they sold the ore to. Funds were starting to build up. It didn't take long for the family to arrive at the chapel and park their vehicles. Starbuck saw a modest sized wood building with a spire at one end and a set of double doors at the other. It had once been painted white, but the paint had faded to a light grey color. Starbuck and the Davis' walked as a family towards the entrance. After greeting one of the church's elders at the door they made their way inside, greeted others the Davis' knew and sat in their customary pew. Starbuck fidgeted on the barely comfortable pew and constantly wiggled his toes in his confining dress shoes while the ceremony began. He listened to the music the choir performed and to the message the pastor gave. The message's morality was not hard for him to understand, but the meanings of the references were bewildering. So, Starbuck spent his time watching those around him. Most were intently watching the man on the stage, a few were taking notes, and while others were reading. Ron had told him that the service would normally run two hours or so. Starbuck unconsciously ran a reverse count down to help pass the time. An hour and a half to go, he counted to himself. An hour and fifteen minutes to go, he thought after looking at his new watch for the umpteenth time. In a fit of frustration at his boredom, Starbuck reached for a book to read from the rack at the back of the pew in front

of him. Maybe, this Bible book will tell me something of what happened to the 13th Tribe. He opened it to page one and began reading to the approving glances of The Davis'. Over an hour later Starbuck remained seated in his place, reading intently, as the rest of the church emptied at the conclusion of the service. "Come on Bill, it's time to go," Carly pleaded. "Huh," Starbuck said to no one in particular as he tried to make sense of the stories in the book of Genesis. He had read about the creation and Adama and Eve and was now starting the story of Noah. The knowledge John gave him on the Ship of Lights included reading in English, but, this was still a new skill for Starbuck and he had to work harder than normal to understand what he read. "Bill," Ron said a little louder finally getting Starbuck's attention. "Oh, ok," Starbuck said while putting the Bible back into the rack in front of him. He then stood up and followed Ron and his family towards the exit. The pastor and his family were talking to other church members as they were departing. As the Davis family approached Pastor Thomas Clark finished his conversation and turned towards the Davis's. Ron, then Carly praised the pastor for his well delivered speech said a quick hello to the pastor's wife and children and went out the doors imploring Starbuck with their eyes to quickly follow them. Starbuck knew that he couldn't just ignore the man. So he walked up to the pastor and stuck out his hand and smiled. "Hi, I'm Bill Rogers and I work for the Davis's on their farm." "Hello, Bill. I'm Pastor John Fitzpatrick. I hope you enjoyed the sermon." "Actually, I had a little difficulty with it. But, I will study the Bible more so I won't have so much trouble next time." "Good, good. Hopefully, we'll see you here again next week." "We'll see," Starbuck replied. Then he moved to greet the pastor's wife, Helen. He said hello and shook hands gently with her and moved on to quickly do the same with their two children. The first was a young woman and the second a teenaged boy. "Hi, I'm Theresa," she said as she held her hand out. Starbuck was taken slightly aback as he saw Theresa's blonde locks and warm smile. He was about to take her hand and lay on some charm then remembrance clouded his face and he abruptly turned and left the building to the bewildered looks of the Fitzpatrick's. He quickly joined the Davis's as they walked to their vehicles. A few minutes later Ron and Starbuck were back in the pickup and on the road home. Starbuck sat quietly and stared out the windows. Ron noticed but let him alone. After arriving back at the house, Starbuck jumped quickly from the truck and almost ran into the house. Ron followed a little more slowly after making sure the rest of his family had returned to the farm safely. Inside he saw that Starbuck had quickly changed clothes and was standing at the liquor cabinet with an unlit cigar in his mouth. "Something bothering you," Ron asked. "You could say that," Starbuck replied as he grabbed the first bottle he could find and a glass. Something must really be bugging him, Ron said to himself as he grabbed a second glass and followed Starbuck to the front porch and sat next to him on a step. "Pour me one too," he asked after seeing Starbuck with a full glass of

Bacardi. Starbuck poured Ron's glass full, set the bottle down, and lit his cigar. "I'm sorry Ron," he finally said. "It's just that pastor's daughter..." Theresa must have reminded him of some girl he knew, Ron reasoned. "So," Ron asked. "Who is she?" Starbuck looked askance at Ron then took a long drag on his cigar. "Her name is Cassiopeia," Starbuck replied. "And you were in love with her." Ron completed the thought. Starbuck gave Ron a pained expression and said, "Yeah, I guess I was." "And she is back in that Fleet of yours," Ron said. "Yeah, twenty five years of light speed jumps away," Starbuck said then he took a stiff pull on his drink and winced at the strength of the alcohol. "She's probably just as upset at your disappearance as you are from being here." "True," Starbuck said simply as he finished his drink and poured another. The rest of the afternoon passed with Ron and Starbuck getting slowly drunk on Ron's front porch. They exchanged life stories and talked about Starbuck's love life and how he was ready to settle down with Cassiopeia. During the afternoon bender they eventually got off the dirty steps and found a couple of chairs to sit on. By dinner time both men were unsteady on their feet. Carly, at Ron's father's insistence took food to them on the porch. Around sunset the mostly full bottle of rum was emptied. A few more hours later both men needed assistance from a thoroughly peeved Carly and her mother in law to go back inside. However, Carly and Ron's mother were both warned by Ron's father to let the two men get drunk. Starbuck needed to get his losses out of his system. So, they kept their peace while they helped get the men prepared for bed. As soon as Ron's and Starbuck's heads hit their pillows they were sound asleep. Carly didn't get much sleep that night because whenever Ron got more than a drink or two in him he would snore loud enough to wake the dead. The next morning the aspirin bottle was in serious demand.

Chapter 5 - Sunday, 6 May 1980

Starbuck sat back from his work and wiped his dirty hands on a rag.

Done finally, he thought. "Looks good, Dan," he said aloud to the man working next to him. "Sure does," Dan Foster replied. The two, with Ron Davis's occasional, he still had a farm to run, help had just completed a two month long job of installing the top engine of Starbuck's Viper into the number two position on a Boeing 727-100 airliner. Dan was a member of the same Navy reserve unit that Ron Davis belonged to. He also served in Viet Nam, but as a Fighter Pilot of F-4 Phantoms. He left active duty after his obligation ended to help his ailing mother back home in Billings. His father had died in an auto accident that crippled his mother while he was serving his last tour overseas. He now flew as a copilot for

American Airlines on a local run from Billings to Denver then St. Louis and back. His flying times ran around the clock but at least every other day he was home. Lately, he had been spending most of his off time working on the 727. The Davis's had helped his mother at their house. Dan stood up and said, "I think this deserves a beer." He then closed the access panel over the engine nacelle and engaged the fasteners. The Viper engine had required reworking the engine mounts, wiring, and fuel supply but, once installed it fit fairly well in the aircraft's nacelle and looked little different from the other engines. "Sure does," Starbuck replied. "We'll give her a flight test next week." He also rose to his feet and carefully climbed down from the work platform, walked to the left side of the aircraft's nose, and turned around to look at all the work he and Dan had done over the last few months. It looks like a piece of ancient felgercarb, Starbuck thought. But, it'll get us to the Moon with enough equipment to reopen that old base. The aircraft was surplus from United Airlines and was about to be stored in the Arizona desert. It was obtained six months ago using funds gained from Starbuck's weekly trips to the Solid Gold Asteroid to leverage a loan to purchase the aircraft. It last served United on a domestic route. But now it wore new colors, "Colonial Charters" which was a new company formed under the new holding company "Colonial Industries" under the Davis family ownership. The aircraft itself was extensively modified. The structure of the pressurized volume was reinforced for space operations. And the Viper's scanner, communications, life support, top engine, energizer/Tylium reactor, and fuel tanks were installed. Additionally, surplus Kerosene-liquid oxygen rocket engines and a LOX tank from Pratt and Whitney were installed for reaction control and vertical landing. The latest were the hardest to come by but a scrap dealer in Ohio had some in stock that he was going to sell to a recycler. The price "Colonial Industries" offered to the scrap dealer could not be refused.

Tuesday, 8 May 1980

A few days later, after a partially fake charter flight plan had

been filed for a flight to South America, Dan and Starbuck were preparing for the maiden flight of the modified airliner now space shuttle. NASA's first space shuttle, the Columbia recently had its first flight just months prior on April 12th. Now, it was Colonial Charters' turn. The two pilots had already gone over their preflight checklists and the aircrafts conventional engines were idling. Starbuck was not technically a licensed pilot so Dan was legally the pilot of the aircraft and would conduct the radio calls. However, Starbuck was the actual lead pilot of the aircraft. "Billings Tower, this is Charlie Zero One requesting clearance to taxi," Dan called to

the Billings municipal airport tower. "Charlie Zero One, you are clear to taxi to runway 28 Right." "Roger Tower, taxiing," Dan confirmed. "Here we go," he said to Starbuck as they reached for the throttle controls and advanced the port and starboard throttles to get the aircraft rolling then he pulled the throttles back to maintain taxi speed. It wasn't long until the aircraft was at the end of the runway and Dan called again to the tower. "Billings Tower, this is Charlie Zero One, requesting clearance to take off." "Charlie Zero One," the tower controller replied. "Winds are light and variable and traffic is clear. You are clear for take off." The two men advanced the port and starboard engines throttles again to taxi the aircraft onto the runway. Once there they pushed the outboard engine's throttles up to full power. While Starbuck kept control of the aircraft, Dan watched the airspeed indicator. "V 1," Dan called out as the 727 reached a hundred and forty knots airspeed. "Proceed," Starbuck replied signaling that they should continue with the take off. A few seconds later Dan called, "V R, Rotate." The aircraft had reached take off speed, a hundred and forty-five knots airspeed. Starbuck pulled back on the yoke and the 727 nosed up ten degrees. With a final thump the landing gear lost contact with the runway. "V 2," Dan called a few seconds later. They were now safely airborne. Starbuck then activated the switch to raise the landing gear. The aircraft achieved cruising altitude within thirty minutes and Starbuck set the autopilot. Several boring hours later they touched down in Nashville, Tennessee. There they took on fuel and soon were again airborne continuing their way towards Bogota, Columbia, or at least that is what the FAA assumed. Starbuck and Dan had another destination in mind. This time once they were at cruising altitude high over the Caribbean, Dan pulled out another checklist and started to read from it. "It's time to start up number two," he said to Starbuck. "Energizer Fuel Flow valve." "Open," Starbuck replied after pressing a button on his panel. "Energizer Start" "Pressed...power build up proceeding." Then they waited until the power reached 100%. "Number 2 throttle to idle." "Check." "Number 2 start switch to start." "Check...Number 2 started." "Alright," Starbuck said as he reached for the throttle levers. "Let's see what this baby will do." At his co-pilot's grin, he slowly advanced the number 2 lever a fourth of its travel and then pulled back the number 1 and 3 back to idle. "Maintaining airspeed" the co-pilot said. "So far so good" Then after shutting down the outboard engines, Starbuck advanced the number 2 throttle to 3/4ths and pulled back on the yoke. Starbuck and his co-pilot grinned happily while they were pressed back into their seats as the 727 rocketed skyward heading south towards a polar orbit. To be continued...

"Learning To Fly" By Pink Floyd

Into the distance, a ribbon of black Stretched to the point of no turning back A
flight of fancy on a windswept field Standing alone my senses reeled A fatal

attraction holding me fast, how Can I escape this irresistible grasp? Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies Tongue-tied and twisted Just an earth-bound misfit, I

Ice is forming on the tips of my wings Unheeded warnings, I thought I thought of everything No navigator to guide my way home Unladen, empty and turned to stone A soul in tension that's learning to fly Condition grounded but determined to try Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I

Above the planet on a wing and a prayer, My grubby halo, a vapour trail in the empty air, Across the clouds I see my shadow fly Out of the corner of my watering eye A dream unthreatened by the morning light Could blow this soul right through the roof of the night There's no sensation to compare with this Suspended animation, A state of bliss Can't keep my eyes from the circling skies Tongue-tied and twisted just an earth-bound misfit, I