

“If I talk I’m dead.”

Charles nodded at the man slowly.

“You’re probably right,” Charles said. “A man like your boss, from what I know of him, if he even thinks you gave up information he will hunt you down and slaughter you.”

The bandit captain’s eyes went wide. He was tied to the captain’s chair on the bridge of his ship. Gray Buccaneers had roughly hauled away the rest of the crew from the bridge and now the captain was alone with Charles, Sean, Penelope and seven angry pirates.

“This is no joke,” the captain said.

Again, Charles nodded.

“I know,” he said.

“He will kill me.”

“Probably so,” Charles agreed. “At the very least you’ll have to go on the run. Constantly looking over your shoulder, never able to trust those around you, your guard constantly up. I’ll be honest with you, it won’t be the best life.”

“But at least it’ll be a life,” Sean said from across the bridge.

The bandit looked at the fearsome pirates. Several of them seemed to be slowly inching closer and a few held knives in their hands.

“At least you’ll have a chance,” Charles said.

Charles fixed the bandit with an intense stare.

“Wouldn’t it be nice to at least have a chance to live?” he asked darkly.

The bandit captain was sweating profusely. His eyes darted around the room and he strained against the cord that bound him. He watched in horror as one of the pirates handed a jagged knife to Charles. A light caught the blade perfectly and reflected back into the captain’s eyes. He stared into it, blinded momentarily, thinking about all of the things he hadn’t accomplished yet.

Charles leaned forward, bringing the blade slowly towards the bandit’s throat.

“Falkinburg,” the bandit said quickly.

Charles paused, the knife just inches away from the man’s neck.

“My boss, the man who runs all of this. His name is Isaac Falkinburg.”

A whimper escaped from Penelope as she heard this. Sean moved towards her.

“No,” she sobbed.

Sean reached her and she fell into his arms and broke into sobs. The bandit was watching, confused, but Charles snapped his fingers to get the man's attention.

"Is he the one who sent you here?" Charles asked.

The man nodded.

"He gave us a description of your freighter. Told us to disable it, kill everyone on board except for his wife."

Penelope pulled away from Sean and stepped closer. Her eyes were red from crying and she wiped at them as she spoke.

"What did he say to do with his wife?" she asked.

"Hold her for another day, then turn her over to the authorities. She's set to serve out a real bad sentence that had Isaac's name on it."

Several emotions flashed across her face. Shock, followed by rage. Then came the crushing sadness. She was shaking and Sean pulled her back gently, trying to get her away from the bandit.

"Let's go sit down somewhere," Sean told her.

Penelope broke into sobs and allowed herself to be led to the other side of the bridge.

"Where is Isaac Falkinburg now?" Charles asked.

"The Bazaar."

Charles raised his eyebrows.

"The old trader's station?" he asked.

"Nobody goes near there anymore," one of the pirates said.

"That's what makes it such a good secret base," the bandit added.

Charles stood and thought for several long moments. Satisfied that he had gathered enough information he motioned to the nearest pirate.

"Untie the captain here. Give him some basic supplies and hold him. Once we make our move on The Bazaar release the captain at the nearest spaceport."

"It'd be easier to slit his throat," the pirate suggested.

"We're going to do this one my way, understood?"

The pirate reluctantly nodded. Charles knelt so that he was face to face with the bandit captain.

## The Bond Episode Four

“If I ever hear the whisper of a rumor that you’re out there somewhere looking to bring harm to me or anyone I know, I will personally hunt you down and end you,” Charles said. “Do we understand one another?”

The captain nodded slowly.

“Of course Mr. Bryant. I wouldn’t dream of it.”

“Get him out of here,” Charles ordered the nearby pirate.

Penelope was hysterical and Charles walked towards her. Sean was doing his best to calm her but she was having a complete breakdown.

“Penelope,” Charles said. “We know where your husband is and...”

“Don’t,” she interrupted. “Don’t call him my husband. I never had a husband, all I had was a lie. My husband is dead. This man, whoever he is, that is not my husband. That is not...”

Her words broke off as she started to cry again. Charles watched her closely for several moments before speaking again.

“I understand the pain that you’re feeling. I’d like to say that it gets easier, that the emptiness goes away. But it doesn’t.”

He turned around quickly and stepped away. Sean followed, leaving Penelope alone for a moment.

“You were married, Professor?” Sean asked. “I never knew that.”

Charles whirled on him quickly. Sean flinched as he saw the look on his Professor’s face. Charles looked like he was on the brink of losing it, a rage burning in his eyes. It vanished just as quickly as it had appeared and Charles’ usual emotionless mask was back in place. Sean stared at him, unsure what had just happened. Charles turned and walked away, moving towards one of the command consoles.

“We got the rest of this bandit scum locked up in the storage room,” Sam announced as he arrived on the bridge. “They’re alive, like you asked Charles, but I can’t promise they made it all the way there completely unharmed.”

Sam stood, waiting for a response, but Charles was staring down at the console. After a moment, Sam turned and approached Sean.

“What’s going on?” Sam asked.

Sean shrugged.

“Penelope found out it really is her husband running these bandits. Then I asked Charles about his wife and he...”

“You did what?” Sam asked.

“I, I just asked him if he had been married before. Why is that such a big deal?”

Sam looked over at Charles, then grabbed Sean by the arm and led him out into the hallway.

“Don’t you ever ask that man about his wife,” Sam said once he was sure they were out of earshot of Charles.

“Why? What happened?”

Sam let out a long sigh.

“They were on a trip and bandits attacked their ship. He saw his wife killed right in front of him, then they shot him and left him for dead.”

Sean leaned back against the wall.

“No way.”

Sam nodded.

“It was gruesome business. The first time I met Charles was a few years after it happened. He had left teaching and was bounty hunting full time. He was in a dark place, a very dark place.”

Sam paused, remembering things from that period of time. He shook his head and then poked Sean hard in the chest.

“You let that man’s past stay in the past, you understand? Don’t go asking about his wife or anything else personal.”

Sean nodded.

“Okay, I’ve got it.”

The two of them returned to the bridge. Sean looked over at Charles, seeing him in a whole new light. Charles glanced over at him and Sean quickly looked away. He had seen an edge in the professor’s eyes, a darkness that he hadn’t ever picked up on before. Focusing on it gave him a chill and strangely he found that he was glad to return to comforting the sobbing Penelope so he could stop thinking about it.



CREATED BY PHILLIP HALL

WRITTEN BY A.C. HALL & PHILLIP HALL

EPISODE FOUR – “ALL I HAD WAS A LIE”

“Send it again,” Charles said.

Sean punched in the commands, sending out another SOS burst.

“Why aren’t they coming?” Sean asked, eyeing the spacestation through the viewport.

“They’ll come,” Charles said.

They were aboard the bandit ship they had captured, racing towards the Bazaar at full speed. Several of the Gray Buccaneers ships were hot on their tail, firing rounds at them that just barely missed. The bandit ship shook as one of the Buccaneers in pursuit connected with a salvo. Charles shot Sam a look.

“They’re not used to intentionally missing their targets,” Sam said. “Besides, it gives it a sense of realism.”

“I think I see something,” Sean said.

Charles punched in the commands on the Captain’s console to increase magnification on the viewport. He enhanced the spacestation. A squadron of twenty small fighter ships was coming around from the far side of the station.

“Keep the burst going,” Charles said.

Sean continued to send out the SOS burst as they tried to sell the ruse. He had been confident in the plan but now that they were here he wasn’t so sure. The

squadron of small ships was coming right for them and Sean turned towards Charles.

“Maybe they know we’re the ones in control of the ship,” he said.

“Quiet down,” Sam said. “We’re flying one of their own vessels, getting chased down by their enemies. It’s a perfect plan.”

Sean wasn’t sure he agreed with the word perfect but turned back towards the viewport. It still looked like the ships were coming to attack them but at the last moment they spread out just enough to allow the bandit cruiser to pass.

As the bandit fighters began engaging the Gray Buccaneers, Charles steered them towards the spacestation. Once a popular stop for merchants, there were docks ringing the station. Some were clearly more used than others these days and Charles approached one that looked to be completely in disrepair. The docking clamps didn’t engage and they had to use their own ships clamping system to complete the docking process.

Charles led them all to the airlock. Penelope followed behind them, but one look at her face told Charles that she intended to come along no matter what, so he didn’t question it. Sam opened the bulky airlock door and then stood aside as Charles swept into the room on the other side, his silver pistol in hand. Just as he had hoped, using the older dock had brought them into an abandoned part of the station. It was a dark, dusty old hangar and after looking around for another moment he put his pistol away and waved the rest of them forward.

Sam came through first, wielding his massive weapon of choice. It had the appearance of an overgrown, technologically advanced sledge hammer and he rested it on his shoulder. He referred to the weapon lovingly as Lenore and no one had ever dared ask him why. Sean was next through and Penelope brought up the rear. Charles was about to speak when they heard someone approaching.

Using hand signals to communicate, Charles had Penelope hide and then he, Sam and Sean took up positions near the opening that lead into the room. They could hear footsteps getting closer, and soon two well armed men appeared. The first wasn’t even all the way into the hangar before Lenore slammed into his head, crushing his skull. The second man turned, shocked, but was grabbed from behind by Charles and thrown to the ground before he could raise his weapon.

Charles put his foot on the man’s throat and pressed down hard.

## The Bond Episode Four

“Where’s Isaac Falkinburg?” Charles asked.

The man smiled. It was a wide, toothy smile, the grin of a psychotic.

“You’ll never stop the Four Horsemen,” the man said.

Charles pressed harder, cutting off the man’s breathing until he passed out.

Once he was unconscious Sean began tying him up.

“What are the Four Horsemen?” Charles asked.

Sam shrugged.

“Beats me.”

Once the soldier was securely bound they set out down the hallway.

“There were administrator offices in the center of the station,” Charles said. “If Isaac’s here then that’s where he’ll be.”

He led the way as they set off in that direction.



“Ah Professor Fay, please come in,” Dean Washington said.

He had made no attempt to disguise his negative tone of voice as he waved Fay into his office. Gordon was used to this sort of treatment by now and ignored it as he entered and took a seat.

“I’m certain you know why I’m here,” Fay said.

The Dean sighed as he sat down behind his large mahogany desk.

“Let me take a wild guess. Does it have anything to do with Charles Bryant?”

“As a matter of fact it does.”

Dean Washington chuckled and leaned back in his chair.

“What a surprise.”

“Dean, I know that Professor Bryant is important to you...”

“He’s important to this whole University!” Washington interjected.

“That’s your opinion, but even if you’re correct, it doesn’t change the facts about what he is.”

The Dean had played this game too many times with Fay and he knew that this was the point in the conversation when he was supposed to ask a question. He fought it for several long moments, but finally asked just to hurry the meeting along.

“And what is he, exactly?”

“Charles Bryant is a mockery of everything this University stands for,” Fay said. “He’s a violent, terrible man who is systematically destroying the reputation of this great institution.”

Dean Washington couldn’t help but laugh at these claims. Fay stared at him, stunned over the rude interruption.

“Gordon, this is the forty seventh time you’ve come into my office and told me why Professor Bryant should be fired. Do you realize that? Forty seven times. I have a little notepad and I mark down each visit, and this is visit number forty seven.”

Fay was growing irritated now. He leaned forward and placed his hands on the desk.

“I don’t care how many times it’s been. All I care about is the students,” Fay said. “Charles Bryant is your meal ticket, your workhorse. But no matter how much money he brings in, that doesn’t change the fact that he engaged in illegal activity by fighting on school grounds. He allowed a student to discharge a gun right here on campus!”

The Dean rubbed his forehead, the beginnings of a headache creeping up on him.

“If you go up against Charles Bryant you will lose every time. He’s an icon at this University and our financial lifeblood,” Dean Washington said. “So don’t push this Fay, do you understand?”

Fay jumped out of his chair and pointed at the Dean.

“I will push this!” he shouted. “You may be blind to the ticking time bomb that is Charles Bryant but I’m not. One day soon he’s going to explode and you’re going to be just as responsible for the damage as he is.”

Professor Fay stormed out of the office, making sure he slammed the door as hard as he could when he left.



Charles held up his hand, signaling Sean, Sam, and Penelope to stop. They were outside a large doorway and voices could be heard coming from inside the

room. Charles carefully peered around the corner. Four men were busy loading boxes onto carts. They were sweating profusely, obviously hurrying to complete the task.

“Why doesn’t the Conqueror just save his documents on the computer like everyone else?” one of the men asked.

“Do you really think it wise to question the Conqueror?” another of the men snapped.

“Both of you shut up. The Conqueror is almost ready to launch. If he’s left waiting for us to show up with these it’s not going to end well for us.”

The men fell silent and finished getting the many boxes loaded. They then left the room through a door on the opposite side.

“Let’s follow them. It sounds like this Conqueror may be Isaac Falkinburg,” Charles said.

They moved quickly through the room and then out into the hallway after the men. In the distance they saw them rush around a corner, pushing the carts as fast as they could.

“These guys aren’t playing around,” Sean said.

Charles nodded.

“We need to pick up the pace. Try not to make too much noise.”

They set out in pursuit of the four men. Charles kept a brisk pace in order to keep them within view. They were heading towards the far side of the station.

“Where is everybody?” Sean asked.

Charles had noticed this too. They should’ve come across at least a few people but so far hadn’t seen a soul.

“They’re evacuating,” Sam wheezed, almost completely winded from the running.

As they came around another corner they could see the four men in front of them. The men had just moved through a large doorway that opened up into a large hangar. Charles drew his pistol and sprinted faster, knowing that this may be his one chance to get his hands on Isaac Falkinburg.

The hangar was cavernous and there was only one large ship inside, parked a few hundred feet away. It was a brand new ship of a sleek design that Charles didn’t recognize. Two of the men pushing carts were rushing up the ramp into it

and the other two were halfway up. At the base of the ramp two men were engaged in a conversation but they were too far away to be heard. One wore a standard dark blue business suit but the other had on a stylish white suit.

“ISAAC!” Penelope screamed.

Her yell had been instinctual, escaping from her the moment she saw her husband there at the base of the ramp. Isaac and the business man turned and looked at the intruders. Isaac pointed towards them.

“Kill them!” he shouted.

Hearing her husband give that order felt like having a dagger stabbed into her chest, and Penelope nearly fell to the floor. Five armed men came rushing down the ramp of the ship and opened fire. Charles upturned a nearby metal cart and crouched behind it while Sam and Sean dove behind some nearby boxes. Penelope remained standing out in the open, her tear filled eyes locked on her husband.

“Get down!” Sean yelled.

He reached up and grabbed Penelope by the arm and yanked her down. Bullets hit the boxes just as she fell behind them. The hangar was filled with the sound of gunfire as Sean and Charles returned fire. Isaac and the man in the blue business suit began running up the ramp towards the safety of the ship.

“Oh no you don’t,” Charles muttered.

He dropped behind cover and holstered his pistol. He pulled the black rifle off of his back and quickly checked the sights on top of it. Satisfied that they were lined up true he raised back up and rested the rifle on the top edge of the overturned cart. Using the cart to steady his aim, Charles began lining up the crosshairs on Isaac Falkinburg. He knew he only had a few seconds to take the shot before Isaac disappeared into the ship. He tracked ahead of the man slightly then exhaled slowly and squeezed the trigger.

“Mr. Falkinburg!” the man in the blue suit screamed.

The man lunged forward and shoved Isaac as hard as he could, knocking him down to the ground. The bullet struck the businessman instead, striking him in the abdomen. He fell backwards and proceeded to roll all the way down the ramp. Charles cursed under his breath and quickly pulled back the bolt on his rifle. Once it was ready to fire again he looked back through the sights only to see that Isaac was already onboard the ship.

One of the bandits at the base of the ramp opened fire with a heavy machine gun and Charles and Sean were forced to dive down. Bullets pinged loudly off of the metal cart and they tore into the boxes, sending a shower of splintered wood into the air.

Charles peaked around the cart and saw Isaac's ship powering up. He gritted his teeth and stood up quickly. He raised the black rifle and fired but the round dinged harmlessly off the ship's hull. The machine gunner saw Charles standing and fired. Bullets whipped within inches as Charles dove back down, barely avoiding being shot.

He could hear the whir of the engines on the ship over the machinegun and cursed again. He started to stand up again but a hail of gunfire cascaded into the cart, sending him right back behind it. Charles looked over at Sam.

"Ready?" Charles yelled.

Sam was staring down at Lenore, watching a gauge on the side of the gigantic weapon. It was slowly filling with color and it turned green and flashed. Sam looked over at Charles and gave him a thumbs up.

"Give him covering fire, Sean!" Charles shouted.

He pulled his pistol back out and reached it around the cart and began firing blindly. Sean did the same and the two of them drew the attention of the bandits. Sam rose up from behind the boxes, Lenore cradled lovingly in his arms. He had flipped the weapon, bracing the hammer head of Lenore against his shoulder and pointing the grip towards the bandits. He pressed a button and a deafening thunderclap ripped through the hangar. An opaque white cube of energy raced towards the bandits, exploding with a hollow thud when it reached them. It took two of them off of their feet and sent the other three scurrying for cover.

Sam fell back behind the boxes and grimaced as he touched the spot on his shoulder where he had braced Lenore. The weapon had broken lesser men who tried to fire it, and even with a frame as massive as his, it had a tendency to leave Sam the worse for wear.

"What is it?" Sean asked.

The cube of energy had exploded on contact but that was not the last of the weapon's damage. Tendrils of energy were raining down upon the bandits, moving through the air like smoke. Sean watched, wide eyed, having never seen

anything like it. The first shred of energy touched one of the bandits and the man screamed out. Sean assumed it was some sort of chemical compound but then saw as it moved through the man and came out the other side. He watched as all of the remnants of energy did this, passing through the men in a haunting, ghostly fashion.

Several of the other bandits let loose horrific screams. One was wailing and crying and another was curled up into a ball. Sean looked over at Lenore fearfully, wondering what sort of weapon it was.

Charles got to his feet and rushed forward. The ramp to the ship had retracted now and the engines were in the process of engaging.

“No!” Charles yelled.

He had reached the spot where the bandits were and one of them reached for his gun. Charles shot him, then quickly returned his attention to Isaac’s ship. A rage overcame him as he watched the ship rise up and then move towards the open bay, nothing but space beyond. The weight of ten years was upon him, threatening to push him over the edge and into the darkness that he fought every day to keep under control. The man responsible for his wife’s death had been two hundred feet away and Charles had failed to get him.

Charles stood, shaking as he watched the ship fly out and away from the station. His mind was assaulted by dark thoughts as he lost sight of the ship. He had been two hundred feet away from finishing his decade long quest for revenge and he had failed.

It felt like his wife had died all over again.

A sickly, raspy laugh sounded out from the businessman who was lying nearby.

“That’s as close as you’ll ever come to catching Isaac Falkinburg,” the man said.

Charles whirled around in a flash, his pistol aimed at the man’s head. Sam rushed forward and yanked Charles’ arm upward.

“Easy there,” Sam said.

Charles focused on him, his wits returning slowly. A blaring alarm sounded out from all around and the businessman laughed again.

“The Conqueror has activated the station’s self destruct,” the man said. “It will be my honor to die in his name.”

Charles looked around the hangar but saw no other ships there. If they were going to escape it was going to have to be on the ship they had flown in on.

Charles pointed down at the business man.

“He’s coming with us, Sam.”

Sam groaned, but leaned down and easily scooped up the man. Charles turned around and saw that Penelope was staring out the open bay, a blank look on her face. She looked like she was in shock.

“Sean, drag her, pick her up, do whatever you have to do,” Charles said. “We’ve gotta move.”

Sean nodded and moved over to her. When she didn’t respond to him, he hooked his arm around her waist and started leading her forward. They all followed as Charles ran from the room, leading them back across the station towards their docked ship.



Sean leapt into the captain’s chair and began punching in commands to bring the ship online. Charles was next onto the bridge and he moved to a different control panel and began overwriting the startup procedures. Sam came lumbering into view, his face covered in sweat. He dumped the gutshot businessman onto the floor and pointed at Sean.

“Punch it, lad!” Sam bellowed.

He wasn’t sure the engines were ready but knew that there was no time for certainty. He slammed the controls forward hard. The ship lurched to life with a terrible screech. The docking clamps were still engaged and had just been ripped away from the side of the ship. Alarms sounded, alerting the bridge to hull breaches where the steel had torn off.

“Whoops,” Sean muttered as he maneuvered them away from the station.

Charles punched up the rear view on the viewport and it materialized just as the station self destructed. A brilliant white flash appeared and then the station crushed in upon itself, imploding in a matter of seconds. Sean kept them moving

away at full speed for a few minutes, then eased off once they were clear of the area.

The businessman was sitting with his back against the wall, holding his hand over his bullet wound. Charles approached him slowly, methodically, a dark look in his eyes. This wasn't just another bandit or Dark Bounty Hunter, it was a well groomed, high society businessman. Not the type of person Charles had expected to find in the midst of bandits.

"You'll never capture the Conqueror," the man spat. "He is the White Horse, soon to be given a crown by this pathetic galaxy."

Penelope had stumbled onto the bridge a minute before, still in a shocked stupor over the run in with her husband. She snapped back to reality now.

"I know that voice," she said.

Charles looked over at her. Penelope slowly approached and for the first time looked closely at the businessman. She put her hand over her mouth.

"Arthur?" she breathed.

"You know him?" Charles asked.

She slowly nodded. Penelope was shocked and appalled as she looked upon the man.

"His name is Arthur Harrison. He's one of Isaac's business partners."

Penelope took a step back and shook her head.

"You were a guest in my home," she said, growing angry. "I welcomed you into my home, I cooked meals for you. I've babysat your children, Arthur!"

Charles motioned towards Sean and the young man approached. He placed a hand on Penelope's shoulder to try and calm her down.

"How could you pretend to be normal and really be a monster underneath?" Penelope yelled. "How could a man do that to the people he loves?"

Sean gently pulled her back but she fought against him and pointed angrily at Arthur.

"Where did Isaac go, Arthur? Tell me where he went so we can find him and make him pay for what he's done!" she shouted.

Sean again pulled on her and finally she relented and stormed off to the far side of the bridge. Arthur laughed.

“You’ll never be near Isaac again,” Arthur said. “The other horsemen will see to that.”

Arthur looked up at Charles and smiled.

“You can’t even begin to comprehend the magnitude of what the Four Horsemen have put into motion!” Arthur preached. “The Conqueror has ridden out to secure his victory in these sectors, and soon all will know the true might of the horsemen!”

Charles just stared down at the man. Sam approached slowly and gestured towards Arthur.

“Aren’t you going to interrogate him?” Sam asked.

“The man’s a fanatic,” Charles answered. “He’s not going to tell us anything.”

Arthur laughed again, but was interrupted as he fell into a coughing fit. Blood splashed out from his lips and he wheezed more heavily now. Charles and Sam stood stoic, looking down as the man slowly and painfully died.

A heavy silence hung in the bridge. Sam grabbed Arthur’s leg and dragged him off of the bridge. The absence of the body did little to lighten the mood and many minutes went by without anyone saying anything. Sean stayed beside Penelope, Sam was seated in the Captain’s chair, and Charles was deep in thought.

Penelope watched Charles closely, waiting for the moment that she knew was going to come any second now. At long last Charles looked up at her. Their eyes locked and she did her best to appear brave as she spoke.

“You don’t have to say it Professor Bryant, I already know. The time on Isaac’s bond has run out and now you have a legal obligation to turn me over to the authorities.”

Sean held up his hand.

“Hold on a second, we’re not at that point yet, we can still...”

“She’s right,” Charles interrupted. “The bond is up.”

Penelope fought hard to keep her emotions under control. She stood up straight and nodded.

“Thank you for your attempt, Professor Bryant,” Penelope said. “I didn’t leave you much time to work with and yet you got us right there in his presence. I doubt anyone else would’ve even gotten half as close.”

Charles regarded her for a long moment, then nodded his appreciation. Sean shook his head and stepped forward.

“There’s got to be more we can do here, Professor,” Sean said.

“It’s time for us to head home, Sean.”

“But...”

“It’s time.”

Sean fell silent and looked down at the floor. Penelope wiped tears from her eyes, trying desperately not to lose control. Charles turned towards Sam, who was still sitting in the captain’s chair.

“I’ve got the course plotted out,” Sam said.

Charles nodded.

“Do it,” he said.

Sam pushed the throttle forward and turned the ship, setting it on the path back towards the University and the law enforcement agents who would be expecting delivery of Isaac Falkinburg or the person who had been foolish enough to sign on as his bond.

END OF EPISODE 4

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