

Terra Nova

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Terra Nova

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Summary

With his vessel lost, and his crew scattered, Captain Edison finds himself standing at a crossroads. He decides to journey to Terra Nova, an Earth colony, to reconnect with his family.

Terra Nova, Earth colony

A small arrow-shaped transport ship belonging to Earth's Colonial Transport Service jumped out of warp as it set course at impulse speed towards the planet Terra Nova.

Terra Nova, dubbed the 'Great Experiment' by the Earth Space Program Agency almost seventy-five years ago, was the Agency's first real attempt to establish a colony outside of Earth's solar system on a planet with environmental conditions similar to Earth. Located less than twenty light years from the Sol system, the lush green planet was now home to over four hundred thousand colonists.

Balthazar Edison, dressed in full hiking gear and carrying a sizable rucksack on his back, cautiously maneuvered through an open field. With each step, his boots sank deeper into the muddy ground. Having spent most of his adult life aboard starships, confined between bulkheads in an environment controlled by artificial gravity, the experience of walking in the open air felt like a battle against all of nature's forces. The ground tugged at his boots, and the strong winds sliced through his face like razor blades.

"Bloody hell," he muttered to himself as he struggled to free his right foot from the muck, finally succeeding after the third attempt, releasing an exasperated sigh. Fatigue slowly crept over him, although he didn't check his watch, he estimated he had been walking for about ten hours straight since leaving the city.

Why hadn't he simply ordered a taxipod to take him to his sister's house? The thought crossed his mind. The truth was, he needed some time alone. Ever since he was forced to destroy his own ship, the *Invincible*, the incident had played in his mind on a never-ending loop like a broken record. The United Earth Stellar Navy's inquiry board had acquitted him of any wrongdoing, but the fact remained that captains weren't supposed to destroy their own ships, and that gnawed at him.

Spending the last ten hours hiking through the woods and fields of Terra Nova had provided him with a semblance of serenity. However, now that the terrain grew muddier, it felt as if the very ground itself was trying to pull him back into the past, back aboard the *Invincible*.

Then, he spotted a plume of smoke in the distance. It felt as if someone had thrown him a lifeline to escape. A smile crossed his face as he realized he was almost there, and with newfound confidence, he continued his journey.

Evening had already fallen when Edison set foot on the porch of his sister's farm. As he did, the front door swung open, and before he could react, he found himself staring down the barrel of a plasma rifle.

"Who are you, and what the hell are you doing on my doorstep at this time of day?" Sarah Edison aimed her rifle at the stranger on her porch, her face shrouded in the growing darkness. All she could discern was a tall man wearing a fedora hat.

Edison slowly raised both hands. "Talking about a warm welcome."

Sarah tilted her head slightly to the left. That voice... she recognized it. "Zar?" It sounded more like a question she was asking herself.

Edison cautiously reached for his hat as Sarah maintained her aim with the rifle, ready to fire at any moment. One wrong move, and he would be dead. He removed his hat, hoping his sister would still recognize him.

“Yes, Sarah, it’s me,” he smiled. “Now, could you please lower the rifle before you accidentally blow my face off?”

Sarah looked at her plasma rifle, confused and somewhat frightened, as if she were holding a snake about to strike. She tossed it aside, ran down the porch steps, and embraced her brother.

“I’m so glad you finally made it out here, Zar.”

Before Edison could say anything, he noticed the outline of a young man standing in the doorway.

“Mom? What’s going on? Who’s out there?” David, her 18-year-old son, asked.

Sarah released her brother from her embrace and turned around, looking up at her son. “It’s your uncle, Balthazar.”

David’s mood darkened. Unlike his mother, his uncle’s unexpected visit didn’t spark any joy. “Don’t call him that, Mom! I told you, he is not my uncle anymore!” David walked back into the house, slamming the front door shut behind him.

Edison’s eyes widened in disbelief. What the hell had just happened? As far as he knew, he had always been a hero to his nephew, the big and strong space marine fighting the bad guys in space. He searched his sister’s eyes for answers, but Sarah looked away. Tears continued to flow, but they were no longer tears of joy. She wiped her face dry with a handkerchief from her pocket.

“Come,” her voice trembled, “Let’s get you inside. It must have been a long journey, and you must be very tired.”

It was clear to Edison that Sarah wasn’t ready to talk yet, so he simply nodded and followed her into the house.

Edison, freshly showered and wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt, leaned against the fireplace in the living room. With the back of his right hand, he reached for the golden flames.

Sarah entered the room with a steaming plate of food. As she watched her brother playing with the fireplace, she said, “Pretty amazing, isn’t it?”

He turned around, his lips curling into a warm smile.

“Thomas always wanted a *real* fireplace. Not one of those fake holographic imitations. He could stare into those flames for hours, just daydreaming,” she said, her voice tinged with sadness as she remembered her late husband.

A moment of silence passed.

“That smells delicious,” Edison said as he sat down at the table and dug into his plate, cutting into the steak. As he tasted it, his eyes widened in surprise. “Hmm.” Still chewing, he added, “This isn’t just delicious to smell; it’s an explosion of flavor on the taste buds!” Edison exclaimed, his eyes lighting up with delight as he savored every bite of the steak. “I can’t remember the last time I had a steak this mouthwatering perfect!”

Sarah let out a happy chuckle. “I’m glad you like it.”

Edison took a few more bites and then dipped a small potato into the brown sauce. “So, what’s up with David? He’s definitely angry with me. That much I can tell. But why?”

Sarah shifted in her chair, her eyes suddenly focused on the tablecloth.

Noticing her hesitation to talk about David, Edison reached out his arm across the table and placed his hand on hers, trying to convey trust.

She finally made eye contact with him again and nodded. “I know,” she said softly as she pulled her hand away, “It’s just not easy to talk about, you know.”

“Is it something I did?” he wondered.

“No,” she replied, “Actually, it’s something you *didn’t* do.”

Confused, Edison raised his eyebrows. “Something I didn’t do? What do you mean?”

“Well,” Sarah began, “After Thomas died last year, I think David believed you’d come here for the funeral. And after that, stay here for a while to help us out during the first couple of months.”

She looked aside, trying to conceal the anger bubbling deep inside her. “Life out here isn’t paradise, contrary to what Earth propaganda would want you to believe.”

“I know it isn’t,” he said softly, pausing as the weight of their situation sank in. “But you understand why I couldn’t be here,” he added, a tinge of regret coloring his words.

She met his gaze, feeling her anger dissipate. “Of course, I do. You were out there, on patrol, a dozen light years away from us,” she said softly, reaching out to place her hand on his. “Look, I’m not angry with you. And I believe deep down inside, David isn’t either. He just needs some time.”

Edison nodded, his voice gentle as he replied, “Perhaps I wasn’t here when you needed me most, but I’m here for you guys now.”

They exchanged smiles, their faces radiant with the joy of reunion after so long apart. The bond between brother and sister remained as strong as ever.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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