

Falling Skies

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Summary

Visiting his sister on her farm on the Earth colony Terra Nova, Balthazar Edison endeavors to heal the rift between himself and his nephew, David, which stemmed from his absence following David's father's passing.

Terra Nova, Earth colony

Edison gazed across the green fields of Terra Nova. Unlike yesterday, there was not a cloud to be seen in the sky above. He smiled as he heard the twittering of birds in nearby trees. It was truly a different sensation than waking up to the pulsating sound of a warp drive engine on a starship.

He turned to his left and saw his nephew, David, holding a padd in his hands, controlling the automated tractor plowing the field. It was his sister Sarah's idea to join David today, under the pretense of giving him a taste of life on a farm. But that was an obvious ruse. Her true goal was to bring the two of them together, to give her son a chance to clear things up with his uncle. Other than a few words about the tractor and its mechanics, it seemed David was giving him the silent treatment. It pained Edison to see his nephew like this; he was clearly suffering. Edison could see it in his eyes. He let out a heavy sigh, releasing some of the pressure boiling deep within him. He realized he had to accept the fact that, as long as David remained silent, there was nothing he could do about the situation.

Suddenly, the tractor came to a stop. "Dammit," David cursed as he shook the padd up and down.

Edison walked up to him. "What's wrong?"

David handed the padd to Edison. "Here, hold this for me. I think there's something blocking the engine." As he began walking toward the tractor, Edison quickly followed in his wake.

When they arrived at the tractor, its wheels almost twice their size, David started inspecting the engine. After a couple of minutes of tinkering, he said, "I can't find anything wrong here. It must be a computer bug or something. Let's try a system reboot." He reached out his hand to Edison, asking for the padd. As Edison handed it back to him, David leaned against one of the wheels and started browsing on his padd.

Not a minute later, to their surprise, the engine suddenly roared back to life. The tractor shot forward, causing David to fall face down into the mud.

Edison couldn't help but start laughing. David lay there in the mud, cursing to himself as he spat out mud.

As the humor of the situation finally wore off, Edison reached out his hand to help David up from the mud. David looked up at Edison, and for a split second, the thought of refusing his help raced through his mind. But suddenly, he smiled - the same smile Edison remembered from when David was just a little boy. Any anger or resentment seemed to have disappeared completely. His white teeth shone through his muddy face as he grabbed Edison's hand and pulled his uncle down with him into the mud.

Their laughter echoed across the field as they tried to get back on their feet, occasionally slipping back down. Finally, they managed to stand steady on both feet and fell into each other's arms, reconnecting as family.

Moments later

Edison and David sat at the tree line, overlooking the field, as the tractor continued its work. They hadn't spoken a word since they came down from the field.

As Edison stared into the distance, he said, "Your mother told me why you're mad at me. I'm sorry I couldn't be here for you. But I also want

you to know that I'm proud of you. I know things haven't been easy around here, you helping your mother run the farm and all. The sacrifices you made..."

David dropped his head into his hands and began crying. Sounding angry with himself, he said, "Proud of me? You wouldn't be if you knew what I did."

Edison placed his hands on David's shoulder, trying to comfort him. "There's nothing you could've said or done that would make me any less proud of you. Hey, listen up: whatever it is, we can talk about it."

David looked back up at Edison, wiping away his tears. "It's my fault Dad died."

Edison frowned, clearly not expecting such a revelation from his nephew. "Orion pirates killed your dad. How could that have been your fault?"

"I was with Dad when the Orions raided the village," his voice trembling as he recounted the story. "It was market day. The sun was shining, not a cloud in the sky, much like today. So lots of people were there, you can imagine. Then, suddenly, we heard three loud bangs from above us. The sun was blocked, and for a moment, we thought it could be a thunderstorm suddenly sweeping in. But then we saw them. Three Orion shuttles. They landed in the middle of the market square, crushing several market stalls. People started panicking, running in every direction, some even pushing children and the elderly out of their way. And as we saw those Orion pirates jumping out of their shuttles, trying to grab those who were fit enough to sell as slaves while killing everyone else, Dad ordered me to take the motorcycle and head back home. To safety. To Mom."

Edison nodded his head, both understanding his brother-in-law's decision to send his son out of harm's way and David's pain at being forced to leave his father behind. "Look, your Dad did what any father would do: he tried to keep his son out of harm's way. You shouldn't be chastising yourself over a decision he made."

"He stayed in the village to help the lawmen fend off the Orion raid," David said as he wiped another stream of tears from his face. "I often wonder if I could've saved him if I had only waited a little while longer."

"I'll tell you what would've happened," Edison said. "The Orions would've captured you and sold you on the slave market." He put it bluntly, "Your Dad died a hero. By saving your own life, you spared your mother a lot more suffering."

For the first time since his father's death, it felt like the weight of guilt had been lifted from David's shoulders. He smiled and said, "Thank you."

Edison smiled back at him, placing his arm around his nephew's shoulders.

The sun was setting low

Sarah sat on the porch of her farm, peeling potatoes. She looked up as she heard Balthazar and David laughing and talking as they walked up to the farm. It put a smile on her face and warmed her heart, a feeling she had long thought was lost forever.

As they finally stopped in front of her, she inspected them from head to toe. "Oh no. You're not setting one foot in the house looking like that."

The two looked at each other and playfully smiled as if to say, "What is she talking about?".

"You can wash yourselves in the shower down at the stable." As she got up on her feet, she added, "I'll get you guys some clean underwear and clothes."

Later that night.

Edison sat on the porch with a glass of whiskey in his hand, daydreaming as he looked up at the stars above. Suddenly, the front door swung open, and Sarah walked outside, having just finished doing the dishes. She carried an empty glass and a bottle of whiskey. "Mind if I join you?"

Edison looked up at her and smiled. "Of course. It's your porch, remember?"

She sat down next to him, pouring herself a shot of whiskey. "I'm glad you and David worked things out." As she raised her glass for a toast, she said, "To family."

Edison smiled as their glasses clinked. "And mud fights." They both chuckled, recalling the earlier events in the fields.

As Edison gazed back up at the starry sky, Sarah began to wonder. "I guess you miss your life up there, don't you?"

Suddenly, a sense of sadness seemed to grip him. Should he confide his true feelings to his sister, or should he put on his brave face, as he'd done so many times over the past three months? He looked into his sister's eyes and, for a fraction of a second, recognized those of their loving mother. For the first time in as long as he could remember, a feeling of comfort descended upon him as he told her, "To be honest with you, I'm starting to wonder if we should be out there at all."

His statement took Sarah by surprise. Even as a child, her brother could only talk about traveling through the stars, searching for new worlds,

and greater adventures.

“We’ve both learned the hard way that the universe can be a dangerous place,” he continued. “Earth’s forces are spread thinly, and the farther we reach out for the next star, the further we are from home, leaving you - the colonists out here - vulnerable.”

Sarah set down her glass of whiskey and placed her hand on his shoulder. “We all knew the risks when we decided to settle down here on Terra Nova. Yes, there are dangers, and yes, life can be hard out here. But it can also be very rewarding.” With great pride in her voice, she continued, “We are the first seeds of humanity, spreading across the galaxy. I’m not afraid to face the consequences that come with fulfilling our destiny. And neither should you.”

Suddenly, their conversation was interrupted by a series of loud explosions. They both looked up at the sky and saw a dozen fireballs shooting down from space.

The front door swung open again, and David ran out of the house in panic, the Orion attack that had claimed his father fresh in his mind. “What’s happening? The Orions? Did they return?” He looked at Edison with wide eyes, seeking answers.

As Edison got up, he said, “I don’t know, but it definitely looks like debris from a starship.”

Sarah got up now too, sounding worried. “You’re not thinking about going out there, are you?”

David realized his uncle had already made up his mind; something bad had happened, and the navy captain inside him screamed to be out there. He ran past Edison and Sarah, shouting, “Come on. Let’s take Dad’s motorcycle.”

Edison looked at Sarah. “I won’t let anything happen to him. Trust me.”

Realizing her son was a grown man now, old enough to make his own decisions, she just nodded and said, “Just be careful out there. Both of you.”

Edison ran off, following David to the stables.

Moments later.

Edison rode the motorcycle, and David sat behind him, his arms firmly wrapped around his uncle’s waist. In the distance, fires were burning in the woods.

At the crash scene.

Debris was scattered everywhere. The earth was scorched, and trees were on fire.

Edison and David arrived at the scene. They both got off the motorcycle and started inspecting the impact zone, trying to get a clearer picture of what had happened here.

David halted at a piece of what looked like hull plating and called out for his uncle.

As Edison joined him, David pointed at the alien symbols on the hull plating. “Orion?”

Edison tried to get a closer look. With furrowed eyebrows, he said, “No, those aren’t Orion. I haven’t seen this writing before.”

Suddenly, they heard someone moaning and coughing. They both turned around and started searching for this probably heavily wounded person.

Amid the debris field, Edison noticed something that looked a lot like an escape pod. As he walked toward it, he noticed that the hatch of the pod was half open. “David!” he shouted, “Over here.” He took off his jacket and used it to cover his hands from the hot, burning metal as he tried to force the hatch further open.

David finally arrived and helped his uncle pull the alien safely out of the pod.

As they gently placed the alien on the ground, they got a better look at her features.

The alien was definitely female, looking more human than alien. The only differences were her eyebrows, which pointed upwards, and her pointed ears, making her look more like an elf from ancient fairy tales than an alien from outer space.

David and Edison looked at each other, both surprised and worried, realizing they had just made first contact with a species previously unknown to humans. The universe had just gotten a whole lot bigger.

TO BE CONTINUED.

