

Delta V
Rough Draft
Aiden Rose

PROLOGUE

In the midst of an ocean of shining golden wheat, a mother sat writing numbers and figures within her ledger against a wise graying tree while she watched her young son above her, standing on the mountain of branches he had proudly overcome.

"Joel you must be careful up there! Your father will be very upset with me if I'm the one who caused you to break another bone." She told him. "But mom, it won't be you who causes me to fall, if I do, it would be my own self." he said. "Well it certainly wouldn't be me who stopped it from ever happening if I say to you nothing, dearest".

"Well if you put it that way then I'd be the one who caused father to be cross with you." He replied. "That is how it seems to be." She put lightly. As lightly as she could, in her heart she had meant it; although worried for her son she was guarding her own precious sanity with having to deal with Elias in anything other than the coming harvest.

She waved her focus from her begrudgingly descending son back to her ledger. There was a definite bottom line, no matter how she tried to stretch and squeeze their many budgets. They needed the collectors to be functioning within the next ten sunrises, or the harvest would have to be cut in half, which wasn't an option.

She dropped her arms on her lap as her worries only opened with her ledger closing, letting out the biggest sigh she could muster, she told herself a falsehood that she had been telling herself since four weeks ago when Elias left for his business tour to each station. *We will get the collectors working; we will get the collectors working ahead of schedule with two sunrises left over to sort out any and every issue. We've been in this tight of a deadline before and Elias proved his self to me as I did to him.*

She felt better, although no soul can truly lie to their own inner self. Her thoughts wandered on how untruthful that half-hearted thought really was. The parts needed for the collectors were too massive and too expensive to install for them to get it done in less than twelve sunrises, even then they needed at least four more after to get them fully operational. They could take another lending from Elias' lifetime funds to hire some field workers to get a head start on collecting, but that would require an even more insurmountable harvest next season. The last lending would be paid off with this season and if they somehow got five percent more for the grain, which was feasible with how much the military needed this much raw food, they would be entirely paid off and able to downsize the farm once and for all, then her and Joel and Elias could finally live without all this worry.

"Mother what are you thinking about?" Joel asked her. Startled but joyful, she left her thoughts with the tree as she stood and moved to stretch out her weary muscles, she had sat and rewrote too many meaningless numbers for her own liking. *We should have hired a numbers worker long ago.* She thought. Feeling that held some finality to her business, she tried to brighten the mood.

"I was thinking about how wondrous it would be if you would please stop hanging upside down from that branch. Maybe then we could go inside and have lunch." "That was an awful lot of thinking for something you could have told me." Joel said with an innocent smile, as he moved his arms up to his legs and took a firm hold of the branch, swinging off and landing with a graceful thud near his mother.

She hugged him, looking over his young hair covered head up to the cloud filled powder blue sky; she could see the faint dotted ships at ease, blocking the same specks of the sunlight as they have been for months now. The war was always on her mind, with each passing year he was one year closer to being conscripted. The faint low harmony of the fleet's tremendous fission engines was audible to her keen ears. *That's enough with worrying over everything.* She resolved.

She let him down from her arms as they started the quarter mile walk back to the estate. They had walked this path almost every day this season, the old tree was Joel's favorite place play and fall from, and his mother's favorite place to try and forget about her business, although it seemed to be glued in her hands no matter where she hid. The perpetually grey ground was beaten with two pairs of footprints, marking a single long streak from the estate to the old tree through the otherwise pristine field of wheat.

Nearing the estate, Joel let his mother's hand free as he started running to his father, who was trying his best to force the domicile to match the natural beauty of the grain as opposed to its current state of contrasting it.

"You're home early!" Joel cried out. "And you're both late." Elias replied, straining his aging voice to be heard. "Mother had a lot of business to work over today, with you being gone." Joel said as he finally came up to ground near the tall garage bay that his father was painting the top of. The broken collectors were hidden away behind the newly yellowed metal. "She kept saying you'd be mad if I fell off the old tree, but I think she'd be more upset over you falling off the garage, I think you might break more than just a bone from that sort of fall. Why are you painting up there?" "Well," He said, putting the last touch of paint on the garage to gain enough time for Joel's mother to come close enough to hear the conversation. His face twisted in a fatherly smirk, looking off into the distance. "I figured it wouldn't be a bad idea to freshen up this old door since it was looking so weathered." He said, aiming his words to his wife.

"Why are you not at the meeting with Abe's company?" She asked worriedly. "He was the only contractor willing to sell us those parts for the collectors on such short notice, we don't have a big enough transporter to go to the station and pick it all up ourselves, if you tell me that he-"

"I got the parts sorted out for half the price." He brazenly interrupted with a wide beaming grin visible through his large beard. "Elias Braam if you're joking with

me at a time like this I will knock your ladder over and we'll see who's laughing then!" She yelled up to him.

Joel turned to go inside the secondary garage door to hide from his mother's worried anger. "Joel you stay out here a moment!" His father stopped him. "I got the parts for half price because Abe is liquidating his stock. He's paying off his war bonds just like we are after this harvest." Elias said offhandedly as he started his long descent down the ladder.

"How are we going to repair our collectors and transporters anymore if Abe is selling out? And how in heavens name are we paying off our bonds? Everyone has to pay for the war and if Abe thinks he can clean house and just fly away and go off the grid again at a time like this I have a few words for him! Remember what place he put us into four harvests ago? We almost had to give up the farm!" She said as Elias came to the bottom of the ladder. He went up to his wife and son and looked them in the eyes. "No one has to pay any new war bonds; they called for a ceasefire, the war is over."

"What?" Joel cried in childlike surprise. "You are certain?" His mother asked Elias with tears waiting behind her eyes, her and her son's hearts racing in anticipation for an explanation. "Yes I'm certain, Abe told me and I called my old Captain, he said the workers and farmers are being told soon. Abe must have overheard from someone higher up and gotten excited. I rushed home to be here early today, so I could catch you both before bed." He said to his wife.

"This must be a miracle!" She replied through tears as the three hugged and laughed together. "Does this mean we're safe now mother?" Joel asked quietly. His mother became stern, although her smile was heard through her rebuttal. "We have always been safe dear. The war was never near us." "Well then," His youthful thoughts mustered, "I suppose we should have been celebrating this all a long while ago." His parents smirked knowingly towards his disarming ignorance.

"I supposed we should have been celebrating." His mother said as they separated their lengthy embrace. "You both know what that means!" She said. "What does it mean mother?" Joel asked. "It means we have a lot of catching up to do on all that missed celebrating." She replied.

"A whole, whole lot of it."