

ACCELERATION

Orbiting earth means never-ending free fall. The stars are shining bright above my head. Whenever I spend time in the panoramic module, weightlessly floating in front of the massive glass cupolas, they are filling out my whole field of view. Magnificent, barely imaginable and yet so real, so plentiful and yet so unreachable. I stopped counting how often I went around earth already. When I look down, there it is, the blue marble in all its gravitas, trying to squeeze itself through the opposite cupola below my feet. Billions of people living their normal lives. Malls, temples, venues, cemeteries.

Orbiting earth means never-ending free fall. “Dreaming again, Soldier?” – “Kind of, sir.” He points at my ComPad. “I just received notice from HQ, your request for off-world transfer was denied.” – “Yes, sir, I already read the memo.” – “How many requests did you put in so far?” – “I forgot, sir, many.” – “You should stop requesting transfers for a while and rise through ranks to increase your chances.” – “I prefer a walk-on part pushing the frontier over a lead role in a bunker, sir.”

Orbiting earth means never-ending free fall. My ComPad vibrates, another combat deployment. A brief moment left before the orbital drop throws me into the line of fire, until earth makes me feel weight again. What are we fighting over this time? Who knows. Likely malls, temples, venues, or cemeteries. I look through the third panoramic cupola towards the other end of the station. The *Zarathustra* is going off-world, I can see its drive warming up. When it is moving on full thrust towards the stars, like a whizzing arrow longing for the horizon, you also feel weight, even more than when you are standing on earth. One day, I will be on it.

I make my way to the dropship.