Asset Training - Angel Colony

Very rough draft addressing the organization of the colony expedition.

pages ∙ words

He filled me in on the problems related to getting me united with my assigned group.

“So, Arden, your detractors had the matter brought before the board. They proceeded to attack your qualifications, seeking grounds to disqualify you for the naval side of operation. Inevitably they pointed out that you are not a naval officer, and you have no military experience what-so-ever. In light of that reminder, it seems that the board has concluded that your capabilities as a ranking officer is judged to be just as valuable to the mission as your capabilities as an active. On those grounds the delegates called for the board to dismiss your selection for the mission. Naturally,” he related, “the board admitted that it was very concerned with the problem, and thanked the delegates for pointing out their oversight...”

“What!?” I interrupted in disbelief.

O’Neal took another breath and continued, “well, considering the limited resource of active talent, the argument was not sufficient grounds for your ejection, but it did point out a deficit in your qualifications. A technicality, especially since it applies to all actives. What it means is that all of you are going to be entered into the academy and other prep programs to cultivate the experience the job will call for. Sorry, Arden, my plan to short cut you into active duty was nipped in the bud.”

At first I just stared at the him. I am ashamed to admit that I did not recognize him except for the brief collision in the corridor. Black hair, deep blue eyes, handsome roguish features, he might have been a farmer or a soldier with that lean, work hardened build. I felt that animal attraction again in his presence, “thank you, lieutenant,” the x said dismissing the officer who had announced them. As the group filed in the x urged them to take their seats. I held my breath as the x waved *him* over to his side. You could have knocked me over with a feather as the x named him and the young woman who had accompanied him. “Arden, allow me to introduce Connor Annan Lennox, one of your classmates from the curry reservation in Oregon, and Morgan Ellen winter from the Essex reservation in new York. Morgan, Connor, I’d like you to meet Arden eve Sinclair, who I’m sure you both recognize.” Connor and I had known each other on the reservation. I guess ten years did make a difference in a man. I struggled to hear the rest of the introductions, smile and shake hands with each of them as they were introduced.

we all exchanged pleasantries, and the x brought the assembled assets up to date. Shortly he had caught up to where we had been interrupted by their arrival. “...your duties have been formally defined. Your natural assets remain your principle qualifications. Obviously it would not do to leave such assets unemployed. Especially in light of the original project proposal, which is very different in its specifications from what we assumed we would need form you.”

I quirked an eyebrow and frowned as he paused to regard me. I searched my memory—a part acquired from my mother’s mind—and recalled the early drafts of the *explorer* proposal calling specifically for the inclusion of psi-active assets. After I scanned the text in my mind, I saw that it did define a very different function from what everyone currently assumed. “of course,” I whispered. “the original proposal was drafted before the destruction of the *adventure.* Before the disclosure and the declassification of the Sinclair-drake unified field theory. Outside of the projects psionics had not been considered a technical science. The expeditionary services didn’t know the relationship between psionics and physics, so they included active assets assuming that would they be employed primarily for...” My voice had gotten more excited as I traced this line of thought, but I could not bring myself to utter my conclusion.

The x smiled.

“Your responsibilities,” he explained at last, “in brief, are to assist in the selection and cataloguing of life bearing worlds—as I understand that even simple organic complexes produce a detectable field to a trained psi,” Morgan nodded as he looked at her for confirmation. This had not been discovered until active class two technicians arrived to establish research habitats for the survey missions on mars and Venus. The technicians had been lured into the discovery of what was still under debate as potential life forms. The x continued, “naturally it is nice to have another angle from which to look for life out in all of that void, but of course, there is that persistent itch. Your primary objective, however high the odds that the case may be, is to identify and initiate contact with intelligent life.”

I think I held my breath. My mother’s dream, and the cause of her death.

I don’t think that thought was far from anyone’s mind, with me in the room to remind them of the potential cost of this still sought after goal. The x addressed that point at once, “advanced reconnaissance is the most vital and dangerous part of your duties. We are not alone out there, and we know absolutely nothing about the competition—except, that they want us to leave them alone.” He explained what solar authority intelligence had come up with in its investigations and reconstructions of the string of tragedies which had all but wiped out the explorers. This was information I had never heard. The terrible truth was that in every instance where an attempt was made to initiate contact—of which many methods had been tried—the ship and the entire complement had been destroyed. In those rare cases where contact had not been possible to attempt or where the crews had flatly refused to attempt it, they had been left alone. Effectively, this alien civilization had endeavored successfully to communicate the only thing it was interested in telling us, without giving us anything at all to go about them.

“Our intentions,” he returned to the specifics of our briefing, “broadly put, are to make sure that they understand that we will not be intimidated or turned from our objectives in space. Since we can’t talk to them, we have to accomplish this through our actions. So, it going get hairy out there on occasions.

“If, when we deploy, we come across hostiles—and trust me, it likely enough to happen—you don’t want to have any questions what the right thing to do is. Most of the conceivable scenarios will be gone over with you in the training you will receive. If you think up a question, in training or at any time in the future, don’t wait for me or your direct superiors to come around before asking. The minute you got doubts, you grab the nearest scut or officer and get it of your chest. Don’t be picky, the deep is no place to be shy or political. Faced with the unknown any and all input is valid, and you want to get as much feedback as you can before you find yourself in that situation, faced with resolving it.

“Your job, simply put, is to be our edge, the wild card in the deck. You are the answer to the questions we don't know how to ask. You represent the best the human race has to throw at the universe. Frankly, I think that three of you per unit is trimming that edge a little thin, but there aren’t enough class three actives to do much better. Three hundred of you is probably more than the gene pool can on earth can spare.”

Having covered the essentials, the x dismissed us into x’s care to receive our briefing for orientation, our watch and class postings, living arrangements and a lecture in military protocol. I guess some of what was already passing between me and Connor must have been clear enough to see, because as she dropped us off at our assigned apartment, she returned to lecture mode. “one more thing, people,” x pronounced, “we are going to be a long way from home. We will be depending on you for things we cannot predict now, but it is an established fact that actives who are intimately acquainted work better together. Neither the x, or I am telling you to take any particular actions in light of this fact. Nor do we have any particular interest in what you do with your free time, but I remind you that the academy is no place for unplanned pregnancies. You get a situation started, you take it to medical and get signed up for contraception. You will not like the alternative,” she reminded us soberingly, making direct eye contact with Morgan and myself.

I’m pretty sure I was blushing. Morgan and x shared a smile and Connor just looked innocent.