

The Appellate Agittion

Book 8 of the Alliance Conflict

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Chapter 2

Becky's fingers flew across the control panel. She deftly touched control after control in a concentrated, but seemingly chaotic fashion. She stopped and said, "All systems are go for launch."

"Where are they going?" Clowy asked as she stepped into the control room.

Lorano replied, "Becky is stating that she performed a pre-flight diagnostic review of the mini freighter's systems and concluded that every system is operating within the parameters that have been established for each system."

"Oh," Clowy responded. She nodded and said, "When I was in the Alliance Navy, we called that PEDACON." She saw the look of confusion on Becky's face and continued, "Pre-flight Evaluation of the Diagnostic has been Completed and All systems are Operating with Normal settings."

Becky responded, "Isn't that..." She stopped and restarted, "I think all systems are go is much better than PEDACON."

Clowy shook her head so hard that her long, orange hair draped over her gray eyes. She brushed her hair aside with her fingers and responded, "I disagree. PEDACON is far more descriptive and can be modified based on the status of the diagnostic."

She paused for a breath and continued, "For instance, if something was not operating correctly, we would we could simply drop the A in PEDACON and change it to PEDCON. If there was only one system not working, we would change the statement to PED1CON."

"All systems go except one," Becky retorted.

Clowy replied, "Yes, but we could change the mnemonic to identify the offending system. For instance, if we wanted to communicate that the primary navigation was not working, would could say PED1CON NAVP."

"I think it would make more sense to say PEDACON minus NAVP. It seems confusing in the heat of battle to try to decipher the acronym." Becky answered. She realized that her comment could be construed as losing the argument, so she stated, "However, I think it is much easier to say, "We have an issue with the primary navigation system."

Clowy turned to Lorano and asked, "Which command structure do you like better?"

Lorano considered the situation a moment. They were starting a six-year adventure to investigate forgotten cultures and he was being asked to settle a dispute between the two females on board before they had even left the spaceport on Solaria.

The Human female was taller and much stronger than him. She had a predilection for violence and was, to his knowledge, the first being in the galaxy to fail diversity training. In summary, she had the ability and willingness to slap him silly.

The other combatant was his wife and the mother of his two children. She lacked the strength to physically harm him, but she literally could cry for the next three days. That would be annoying to say the least.

Lorano decided that deciding this debate really wasn't worth it. He responded, "Both systems have merit and are perfectly capable of communicating the relevant information to those individuals who need it. I think that either command communication system can be used effectively on this ship."

Whew, he had sidestepped a projectile fired at an extremely high velocity with that answer. He looked around for Colin O'Neal and noted just a little despairingly that he was nowhere in sight. Colin should be in charge of settling the females' disputes; not him.

Lorano leaned over and checked the exterior cameras. The overwhelming majority of their friends had been on the landing pad to say goodbye. It would be unfortunate if they were to prematurely engage the thrusters and incinerate them. The crowd was slowly starting to disperse. It would be several more minutes before they could launch.

Lorano announced, "I am going to inspect the cargo holds a final time before we leave. Please wait until the sensors show we are clear before launching."

Lorano inspected the primary, secondary, and tertiary holds. Although their mission was only planned to last six years, they had packed enough food, equipment, and spare parts to last for twenty.

He passed a huge barrel he didn't immediately recognize. He inspected the contents and noted it contained the raw materials for makeup. He lightly kicked it with his foot. It didn't budge. And makeup, he added to the list. They had enough makeup to last for 50 years. Lorano took out the label maker his friend Carank had given him and created a label that simply stated Makeup and attached it to the side.

"Everyone is clear of the space dock," he heard Becky announce over the ship-wide intercom. "We are launching now."

Lorano grabbed the side of the transport and waited. The ship gently lurched to one side and then straightened out and began climbing. Becky had recently completed the pilot simulation training and was the best pilot on the *Sunflower2*. Not good by any means, just better than the others.

Humans were the best pilots in the galaxy. They had an innate skill for handling all types of craft. However, he had managed to get the only two on the planet that seemed to have no natural ability for flying. Just his luck.

He briefly regretted not inviting Ace and his wife Red to join the mission. It would have been helpful to have the best fighter pilot in galaxy fly the craft. Oh well. Ace was now commanding the entire fighter wing on Earth. He seriously doubted Ace would have given that up to shuttle them around the edges of the known galaxy.

He made a mental note to secretly teach Aiden, Becky's six-year-old son, how to fly. Perhaps he had could do better than Becky. He certainly couldn't do worse.

Becky made another announcement, "We have cleared Solaria's atmosphere and are now proceeding to the edge of the system's gravity. We will be able to jump in approximately twenty minutes."

Becky then asked, "Where are we going?"

Lorano had a long list of gravity anomalies, old chart locations, and a few hunches. Although he had been planning the mission for over year, he still hadn't decided where to go first. He supposed it didn't matter as long as they went somewhere.

He responded, "I am coming to the control room now. I have identified the three potential targets closest to us. We will decide as a team which one to investigate first."

Lorano scooted out of the tertiary hold and back into the main corridor. As he walked down the main corridor the caribou painted on the walls leapt beside him. The famous artist Fletcher Birdsong had painted the corridor as a going away present. Fletcher had wanted to paint buffalo in the corridor but, everyone had overruled him. It seemed somehow fitting to have caribou running in the corridor again.

Lorano reached the control room and took his usual seat. There weren't assigned seats per se, but everyone tended to sit in the same seat. The two boys followed him in and took their seats. Colin entered with the two girls and put them in their chairs.

The control room of a mini freighter normally only had seating for two beings. However, they had expanded the room by relocating the three standard cyro stasis chambers to a different section of the ship. This provided enough room for a single row of six comfortable chairs to be placed across the back of the control room.

The two females seated directly behind the console swiveled around to face the others. Becky said, "Okay, what are our options?"

"We have three good options," Lorano responded.

He used his communication pad to activate the main display and brought up a star map of the local area. This caused the two females to have to choose between facing the monitor and facing their families. Becky swiveled back about 90 degrees to her right so that she could look left and see Lorano and right and see the monitor. Clowy did the exact opposite, which had the same effect.