Farmer’s Maze

Character

Ona Barbales

The Barbales family

General area of expertise: Forensic science, registration and processing of leads

Sexuality and relationships: Strongly introgamous, mostly monogamous

The Barbales family was established fairly recently, as part of the preparation for the coming war. The family is consequently not very big and is very close-knit, since they have been moved around a lot for education and special jobs. Having no crime on Abar, Ona and Akkel have had to go off-world, to Sacki, for their advanced training.

The family has eight members: two elders (the first members of the family), four adults (forming two couples of which Ona and Akkel are the one) and two children. The elder adult couple each has one primchild, while neither Akkel, only just in his thirties, and Ona at 26 has received any primchildren yet.

Junior Technical Agent Ona Barbales, 26 years

Primsister and partner of Junior Technical Agent Akkel Barbales, completely monogamous and intragamous, heterosexual

Headstrong and single-minded, somewhat conservative, possessive of primbrother, has six months old guest.

Special ability: to talk to rooms. Your special ability works when you cock your head to the side and say:"So, barn/cabin/living room - what can you tell me?" You then have an actual conversation with the room who is played by the game leader. You coax the information out of the room, asking questions like:"So, what was the person who lived here like? Don't be shy, you can tell me."

Ona has a very special ability, one that may turn out to be very useful in military intelligence. In peace time, there really is not very much use for it on Abar, since there is hardly any crime, but she has found some use for it in investigating traffic and workplace accidents. Ona can "talk" to a room, interpret the physical signs in a way that gives her much more information, than one would think possible. She can deduce, very reliably, from the smallest details what happened in a room, what the owner of a room is like and much more.

She learned the theoretical basis for this and honed her skills on the planet, Sacki, a horrible place rife with crime. She and her brother, Akkel, went there for several years to study at one of the universities. On Sacki, capitalism rules, everything is for sale, and nothing is free. People actually die of hunger or sickness, it was awful to experience! She was so happy to return to Abar, and afterwards she has been very much aware that people just don't appreciate their unique and happy society enough.

But she doesn't think it would really be beneficial for everybody to go offworld. The experience also had a profound effect on Akkel, but possibly not to the better. Like how he fell in love with and had a sexual encounter with a fellow military intelligence specialist, Alli. Of course she doesn't feel like she owns Akkel, like one of those possessive Sackians, but she thought Akkel was like her and the rest of the family, strictly introgamous. That is part of what makes them fit together so well and so tightly. Akkel also sometimes sleeps with their older brother, but mostly the four of them make up two steady couples, and since their older brother and sister are too old for her, she really has no other available partner than Akkel. It never worried her before, but now she knows what it means to be jealous.

Akkel met Alli during an undercover operation on Sacki, trying to penetrate the security of the Arisian embassy. She was not very closely involved in the job, so she only met Alli once, but she immediately knew. Not from their faces or body language, but from Alli's apartment. It had Akkel written all over it. It strained their partnership for a bit, but she really worked at it, she knew what she wanted, and as time went on, they put it behind them. Akkel really appreciates her for who she is, headstrong and intensely loyal.

And now there are so many things happening. She has her first guest, which takes up quite a bit of time. These small creatures need a lot of care and attention till they can be given over to their real family. Akkel helps her of course, it would be so unfair if only women had to attend to the guests, just because of biology as it is in some cultures! But since she is still breastfeeding, the baby must stay with her most of the time, and so she carries it in a sling. And then there's the war. Everybody is excited to be sent to their posts, the war effort must really be stepping up now...

Abaranian and Arisian Culture

There are two inhabited planets in the Abaris system: Aris, the third planet, and Abar, the fourth planet. This tale takes place on Abar, when the war between the two planets was just beginning.

Abar

On Abar, children are tested at the age of one to map out their innate personality, talents and intelligence. After this they are placed with the family unit, where they will be best able to reach ther full potential. Based on this test and further tests throughout childhood, their educations and careers are also decided by ingenious programs in the gigantic computers, buried deep underground.

Abaranian families are bound together by the love that arises out of their harmony and common interests, while the biological origin is nothing more than that, a coincidence, a random combination of the genes of two different people. The family shares everything with each other, and everything is owned in common. Sisters and brothers are usually lovers and regarded as spouses, since they are obviously not biologically related, and thereby one of the most common human taboos is lifted.

Marriages as such do not exist, but the adult part of any family the equivalent could be seen as such and thus consist not of one woman and one man, but can consist of any combination of people of both sexes. Physical fidelity and sex is not seen as that important, but does take place mostly within the family. Abaranians define sexual relationships on two different axes, the first being monogamous vs. polygamous, the other being introgamous (sex inside the family) vs. extragamous (outside the family), and all variations can be found. The most loving name you can call your beloved is brother or sister, and even extragamous lovers use this endearment. The only taboo is sex between generations, known as out-of-generation, and a generation is generally agreed to be defined as an age difference of 15 years.

Women normally bear children in their twenties, on average three or four, and are then sterilized, but again this can vary widely. Children are conceived as it may happen as the result of sex, since the culture is yet young, and the planet has room for many more people. The children are not given names and are known as "guests" untill their first birthday when they are tested and placed with their real family, who gives them their name. The attitude displayed towards a guest brings to mind the love given to a special pet.

All of society is consequently organized so that everybody is placed in exactly the niche they are best suited for. There are several families whose members are the directors, lawmakers and administrators of the state apparatus, but the Abaranians see themselves as a democracy. The computer chooses only those persons for these families, that are capable of governing, enjoys it, and that the population would have chosen, did they have the full knowledge that the computers have. Other families are involved in research, farming, the arts, industry etc.

Companies and businesses and are often owned and controlled by one or more families. The economy is a mix between capitalism and a planned economy. Each family or business delivers their services or products without payment. Their performance is monitored, as all data are fed into the computers, and the family receives an allocation of luxury points, based on how well they have done (measured by many variables, among them generation of happiness). All normal amenities are freely available to everybody, while luxury goods and services (as defined by the government and the computers) cost luxury points. The computers are not otherwise involved in the running of society, only in family placement, education, career choice and market monitoring. Everyone is happy, because they are in the right place - with the right people. Or are they?

Aris

On Aris, people are also placed in niches, but based on quite different criteria. Arisians believe that everything is determined by blood. You are born into your family and caste, and you belong to it forever, since no one can obviously change who they are. Everyone knows quite clearly what is expected of them and are trained from an early age in their role. The eldest son or daughter inherits the family property, while the younger child is either dependent on their family's goodwill, or have to fend their own way in the world.

How did the societies on Abar and Aris arise?

The many similar and yet remarkably different customs on Abar and Aris are not incidental. Abar was colonized by disaffected individuals from Aris, who felt that their talents and abilities were wasted in Aris' rigid caste system. Raised as they were in a caste system, their thoughts ran on within this framework, and they developed a different caste system - based on talent and skill, rather than inheritance. The early Abaranians built the gigantic computers and fed them with data from Aris. Tests administered to children at different times were compared with how they had performed in their given career together with data from other planets, where choice is free. For the first several generations, the system

was far from flawless, but gradually, as more and more data were gathered, the process was refined.

The Abaranian community has now existed for over 600 years, and eventually it has become clear that their system works somewhat better than the Arisian. Abar was outcompeting Aris before the war, and some historians believe that this is the real reason for the war between Abar and Aris.

The strife over Allera's inheritance

Albak Skeop, an Abaranian merchant from a prestigious family, met and married a very rich arisian, Lera Skasenak, first-born daughter of a family of mine owners from the industrial caste. When they had a daughter, the father expected them to have their child given the standard Abaranian one-year test. The infant girl had after Arisian custom already been named Allera. The test showed to the father's great joy that Allera belonged in one of the best research families, Kareol. Albak and Lera took the child to its "family" for a longer visit. Albaks unvoiced intention was to surrender the child to the Kareols, but under the influence of his wife's Arisian morals, he became reluctant to be parted from his little guest. When it became clear to the mother, what was happening, she insisted furiously that they immediately go home to Aris - with their daughter.

The Kareol family demanded that she be returned to them, and while these demands were still being tried in the judicial system, the controversial couple died in an accident, exploring for and finding axondit in the belt of Eklas, midway between Abar and Aris. The orphan Allera was now the owner of large properties, including this asteroid belt filled with axondit, a rare mineral, which according to Abaranian researchers from the Kareol family could solve all energy problems.

Now began an inheritance dispute, the equal of which has rarely been seen. The Kareol family felt that they had been deprived of a daughter whose abilities would now never reach their full potential, as she would grow up with people who were merely her biological relatives, never knowing the joy and harmony of a true family. Of course they were also interested in the amazing wealth that was her property. Allera's guardians, her aunts and uncles, refused flatly to give her to people they regarded as complete strangers with no claim to the child.

When the importance of the mineral became known to the public, the two planetary governments became involved. Abaranian lawyers ruled that the asteroids belonged to the Kareol family - according to the very own law of the Arisians - while Arisian lawyers ruled that the Kareol family had no legal claim.

The decisive differences between the two planets' way of life, which until now has been tolerated largely by ignoring each other, are now very visible. The contempt they feel for each other's social structure and moral standards, the disagreement on something as basic as what constitutes a family, has added fuel to the fire, and there seems to be a real all-out war brewing. The skirmishes between Abaranian and Arisian forces have been growing ever more frequent and the seize fires ever shorter. Talks about enforcing a seize fire has bogged down. Both societies are gearing up their military forces, including the military intelligence.

The genetic inheritance of the Abarisians

The people of both Abar and Aris closely resemble the human genetic normal standard.

Gender roles

Both on Abar and Aris the sexes are completely equal, and gender is considered to be a relatively unimportant factor in the assessment of a human.

Dress

Both on Abar and Aris, a constant part of the clothing is a braided ribbon with your family's colors. Traditionally, they are worn on Aris as a braided sash around the waist. This is a symbol of how the family is the living expression of their genetic heritage, which they themselves are carrying around and can pass on (in the genitals). On Abar, on the contrary, they tie a braided ribbon around their heads to symbolize that the true community springs from the mind. The clothing have besides these braided colored ribbons no special features.

Names and behavior

The family name is the more important one, and outside their family you will often simply be called by your surname. Abarisian names often contain k, l, a and e, as seen by the names Allera, Albak, Lera, Skasenak and Kareol. In both languages final e is usually transformed into an I and final o intu a u.

Arisians are very conservative and polite in their behavior, while Abaranians are somewhat more relaxed and individualistic.