

In the vast Union, there exists a unique dwarf planet known as Long Shot, characterized by its unusual coexistence of humans and native sentient beings. This remote world orbits a gas giant and is situated nearly twenty lights away from the nearest colony around an M-class star. Long Shot's name derives from the remarkable journey that brought humans there, marking it as the longest successful jump ever achieved by humankind.

The native inhabitants of Long Shot are tree-dwelling cephalopods, observed leaping gracefully among the branches and skillfully changing their colors to blend with the lush canopy, often only visible in infrared spectra. These beings are concentrated in the central highlands of the planet's sole continent. Despite their scientific and cultural sophistication at the time of human arrival, they lacked material development comparable to that of pre-agricultural humans. This disparity has led to much speculation, with one theory suggesting humans progressed technologically out of necessity, as they struggled in their natural conditions.

In stark contrast, the natives of Long Shot excelled at adapting to their environment without the need for advanced tools like rifles. Upon human landing, the aliens were initially oblivious to the colonists because the beachhead was far from their mountainous habitats. Likewise, the settlers remained unaware of the natives due to their elusive and localized nature. For the first twenty years after colonization, there was no interaction between the two species, allowing both to continue their lives undisturbed.

Histories of the encounter between these two intelligent species lack profound insights into why their relationship developed so uniquely compared to other colonization attempts. One theory posits that the level of fear held by the colonists diminished over time, fostering a more open environment for interaction. Thus, the passage of time emerges as a crucial element in the dynamics of this unprecedented coexistence on Long Shot, suggesting that with patience and continued presence, understanding and respect could evolve.