

La, La, La.

A Short Story

By

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“What is the name of that blasted planet?”

K’eth smiled; Jeus was in one of his moods. The older he got the more soured his disposition became.

“Which planet would that be, great teacher?” he politely inquired, although he knew full well the one which Jeus referred to.

The two were waiting outside the council chamber of the Hansar, the de facto rulers of the Galaxy. It was the time of one of their regular meetings to discuss matters of importance. K’eth was one of the new breed of councillor. While his ideas were popular among the young, they were viewed with suspicion by members of the old guard like Jeus. And his ilk still carried a lot of sway in the council.

It would never do to say it in the chamber, but K’eth considered that the Hansar were in crisis. He could see that the council’s power to control was fading, even on its own planet. It was only a matter of time until the more violent of its vassals noticed this. If they did, problems could ensue for the entire Galaxy. If he only had more influence, he could work to prevent disaster.

The Hansar were not a conquering, oppressive race. They much preferred to leave the running of things to the individual civilisations that made up the bulk of the inhabitants of this grouping of stars. They used their technological superiority to build alliances and maintain order with unspoken threats.

His musing was interrupted by Jeus, who had finally marshalled his thoughts.

“The one that blasts the indiscriminate radio waves at us,” he began. “It was bad enough when they started but at least it was weak and we could ignore it. Just lately it’s become more than a background buzz. Everyone on their rock seems to have a device that emits radio waves and they all bombard our senses. And now they have started throwing things out. We caught another last week; they had named it Voyager or something, if memory serves me. What it must be like living down there these days does not bear consideration.”

K’eth smiled, all societies advanced in their own way. The job of the Hansar was only to guide and, in the fullness of time, to assimilate them with the least upheaval.

Cran, another senior and one whose best days were also behind him, joined the pair. "Forgive my interruption K'eth," he said. "I heard Jeus and cannot help but agree, the noise from this place assaults my peace at every turn, and others have mentioned it to me. What should we do, are they ready for us to reveal ourselves?"

K'eth sighed, the old question, when to reveal. As one of the oldest civilisations in this Galaxy, the council had taken responsibility for every developing species. One by one the seeds that had been sown by the ancients of legend across the vastness of space had come to fruition. Some had not made it, natural disasters, accidents and sheer bloody-mindedness had solved the problems of many first contacts.

The Hansar held the advanced entities in a loose federation. Their rule was strict but benign and kept all at peace and acting for the common good. It was one of the great achievements, with all the competing egos a peaceful Galaxy was a wonder in itself. But then the ancients had been clever in their design and had thought of most eventualities.

There were those who viewed the Hansar as the rightful heirs of the ancients, yet others who saw them as interlopers. Other ancient civilisations thought of them as the fortunate ones who had been first.

Whatever the rights and wrongs, the Hansar were scrupulous in their dealings with all the newly aware civilisations. They took their assumed role seriously. Being comparatively long-lived and reluctant to die helped, as did the medical advances of their scientists. Although recently it had been noted that the longest-lived were developing problems of memory and irrational behaviour. Jeus himself, though he would not admit it, was prone to forgetfulness and long-winded speeches with little substance.

K'eth knew, as did all the Hansar that, according to legend, it was the job of the Hansar to monitor the Galaxy. They kept their senses tuned and their fleet active, searching for developing cultures. Once they had found one that was past the animal stage and was starting to think and show potential they acted in the same way for all.

First, a team of instructors would descend, to gently point the way in agriculture, building and astronomy, all the tenets of civilisation in fact.

Then they waited to see what happened. In the best case, the ideas would be acted on; in the worst, the emissaries would be killed. If they survived, the emissaries promised that they would return to see how the society they had encouraged had developed.

From that point, the watch became more intense, until the time when they were judged ready to meet their neighbours. Then the Hansar would return as promised and guide them into the ranks of the enlightened.

The council met to discuss matters as required, plan strategies and agree on timetables.

Tucked away in the long agenda was a decision on the future progress of the planet the inhabitants called Earth. It was this Earth which was causing Jeus so much distress.

Jeus spoke, as befitted his status as a senior. Earth had been one of his projects; when he himself had been a young, rebellious councillor. He had been one of those who had helped plant the seeds of technology on the place. As far as he remembered, when he could remember anything, it had been a particularly barbaric planet.

He reported on conditions on Earth. It was a dry list of milestones reached, atomic power, advances in medicine and social matters. His delivery made the subject boring and there were restless mutterings from the newer councillors.

Finally, Jeus reached his conclusions. "I propose that we continue to do what we have always done; we leave subtle clues and see if they can reason it out. But these are stupid beings; they dismiss any idea of intelligent life anywhere but on their own world. They think themselves as the Lords of Creation."

There was polite laughter at that, Jeus' favourite phrase was Lord of Creation, particularly when used in self-description.

"And is it not true," broke in another, "that they still believe, in all the vastness of space, they are the only inhabitants. They use some kind of thing they call logic to defend their position."

That comment nearly raised the roof. There was shouting and stamping of feet.

"Logic! If they think that logic dictates they are alone in the universe they are truly still undeveloped," shouted Cran from his seat at the back.

“They say that such a belief is logical, they reason it thus, ‘because we have not found evidence, then none exists’,” retorted Jeus.

“Yet they still seek life beyond their planet, despite that belief?” someone else shouted. “What dichotomy!”

“That is a strange way of using logic,” an old Hansar called Marij added. “I suppose they also assume that life must resemble them, walk upright, breathe oxygen, require water and similar.”

There was more laughter.

“Surely that tells us all we need to know,” said Jeus. “Until they can accept that they are not unique, until they can accept that other creatures than them can exist they should be left isolated.”

“I agree,” said K’eth. “But there is a problem.”

The noise in the chamber came to an abrupt halt at the words. All ears turned, nobody liked a problem.

“Elaborate,” requested the Chair.

K’eth stood and bowed to the Chair, now was his moment to press for his advancement in the hierarchy. “It appears that some of our younger folk have started playing games with the inhabitants of this Earth,” he said. “They obviously have far too much time and money.”

“What sort of games?” asked the Chair, for they too had heard the mutterings.

“They antagonise these bipeds,” explained K’eth. “They taunt and kidnap them, frighten them with displays of aerobatics in their expensive toys and draw patterns in their crops. I don’t know if it is boredom or a lack of parental control. The ones I have spoken to say that they do it to hasten the conclusion that the bipeds are not alone.”

“And does that make any difference?” asked Cons, a female, one of the highest placed. “We all know this sort of uncontrolled action is frowned upon, do we have names?”

“None of note, madam, apart from a few who I have admonished, the ringleaders hide from us behind a web of silence and influential parents. We should be pleased that their actions so

far have had little effect. The leaders on this Earth still squabble among themselves; the few who see our clues and meet these youngsters are ridiculed and called mad.”

“So overall, there is no evidence that these beings are ready for the shock of our finding them? Are they ready to take their place with the other great civilisations?” pressed Cons.

“None at all, when they think of a first contact, they still see it as a probable conquest of some sort. Apparently, they consider that their planet, alone in the entire Galaxy, would possess the only source of something. The one thing that what they call ‘aliens’ might need.”

Again there was laughter at the deluded Earthlings. The Chair called for silence.

“Don’t they see that if we can travel the Galaxy, we have no need for whatever exists on their rock?” asked a councilman called Trod. “Have any other species shown this ‘logic’?”

There was silence for a while as the councillors considered, after a period, the Chair asked, “Well, can anyone think of a similar case?”

Again there was silence, stretching...

“It all comes from their arrogance,” said Jeus, attempting to recapture the initiative. “I remember it at the time; I thought then that the ancients might have put it there to test us, now it manifests at the time when our society is in crisis, it must have been planned.”

“Preposterous,” said K’eth, “how could the ancients have possibly planned this from so long ago?”

“So what should we do with this species?” asked the Chair, indicating that the discussion had gone on long enough. “It seems clear from their actions. They desire contact, should we afford it to them? We need to show our feelings, for the record.”

“I say not,” said Cons, “they have much to learn before that time. And it would be helpful if all contact with them could be kept through the council.”

“Agreed,” said the Chair, “we need to rein in the behaviour of our youngsters. Councillor K’eth, can I give you this task? Find those of our own with nothing better to do than to stir up developing populations. Tell them to spend their time in more useful pursuits.”

K’eth had been placed where he wanted to be. He could gain the trust of the young, with their support, he could move on the council. Perhaps prevent the problems that they could not see

coming. There was nothing for him to do except smile and accept. “Very well,” he said, trying not to show too much pleasure.

“Good, that is settled, we expect to hear no more of it,” said the Chair, “now to the bipeds, what shall we do in the face of their growing interest in the Galaxy?”

“I say that we do not react to their idiotic behaviour, ignore them until they have grown a little more,” said Cons.

“What do you mean, Madam Cons?”

“Well, my own young sometimes display behaviour like these ‘Earth’ creatures. When they are talking nonsense or ignoring the obvious, I say to them, ‘until you grow up, I’m not listening to you.’ Then I place my fingers in my ears and shout La, La, La.”