

WE GOT TO SLOW THEM DOWN

Houdini Nation Short Story #1

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Published: November 2006

They had climbed down from the trees and no one had noticed. Just blinked once and suddenly they walked on twos instead of on all fours and had moved from the trees to the caves. When they started utilizing fire it was detected instantly because the average brightness on the planet surface increased and continued to increase steadily. When they invented the wheel, they were smiled at: "Look at them now, they are building a cart. How sweet is that? We must have been like that, millenia ago."

And it continued like that. Unaware of being observed, the inhabitants of that planet started to settle down, to raise cattle and crops. But nothing happened that needed any intervention on behalf of the observers.

Naturally, the observers couldn't keep themselves from visiting the planet surface from time to time, curious as they were. Whenever the inhabitants saw these visitors it caused confusion among them. While some of the observers were amused by that confusion, others worried about the effects these visits might have.

Some earthlings took the observers by surprise, simply by drawing huge figures into the ground that could only be seen from a very high altitude. These figures became visible rather suddenly, which meant that one had managed to work on them for decades without the observers noticing anything.

That and constructions like the Chinese wall and the pyramids in Egypt should have made the observers more alert. While other species on distant planets developed at a steady, slow pace, the development of man showed a tendency to almost jump ahead at times, changing unnoticed right under the observers noses.

And those simply were too busy analyzing the numerous cults and religions that had developed because of their own visits to the planet surface than to be able to concentrate on the technological evolution.

The observers however weren't too concerned, since man had some sort of a built in, automatical emergency break: they fought wars. That slowed down the development at regular intervals, enabling the observers to analyse the last couple of centuries.

It went back and forth like that for some time until the industrial revolution struck over night. Actually, there had been warning signs but the observers were counting on a new war to deal with the issue. That war actually came in a double pack, but failed to slow anything down. Ever since that time, man had been under twenty-four-hour surveillance. The observers had actually called in extra personnel and new, more powerful computers, but the rapid development of man posed unsolvable problems. Medical and technological developments made sure the population grew despite the biggest wars in the history of mankind. Sneaking in viruses and diseases had no effect: man was too stubborn and only advanced with even more vigour.

Why, you might ask, are the observers so concerned with the rapid development of mankind? Why don't they help to increase the tempo; to solve urgent problems like diseases, epidemics, or greed?

The question is easily answered. Imagine the development of a boiled egg. The process from the evolvment of the species "chicken" until the moment the water boils is the process of the development of man from its creation (Divine or Darwin, take your pick) up to the industrial revolution. If you would now drop the egg into the boiling water it would crack immediately. The whole process before that would have been wasted time, just because someone was in a hurry.

The development of mankind is similar. Of course mankind shall blossom, evolve and finally join the cosmic club of species. But mankind needs time to develop. It had happened once too often that a technologically advanced species had been promoted although they were still infants, ethically speaking. Which resulted in conflicts that proved fatal for said species most of the time.

It is the observers duty to accompany new species on their way into the cosmic alliance, so the worries and carefulness of the observers is quite understandable. Especially since nothing seems to be fit to slow down the pace of development. As if all these incidences hadn't been enough, man developed the computer quite early on. First, these were enormous devices with the computing power of today's wristwatches, but they grew more powerful, smaller and mobile within a couple of years. At the same time, man seemed to have deactivated the emergency break: life was peaceful. It was at least considerably more peaceful than before and peaceful in large areas of the world. Meaning the development could be pushed forward without setbacks.

Then man entered space and even paid a visit to the moon. Another shock after the observers had already thought they'd been discovered a few years before, after receiving what they thought to be news about themselves. Luckily, these reports were analysed as parts of one of the human art forms called literature.

Now the worst that could happen was that mankind became friendly with each other and started to share information unfiltered and distribute knowledge at a large scale; that they found a way of instant global communication ...

And man found that way: the Internet. What had started as a military project was soon used by the private and professional public. Scientists shared their findings and news was distributed instantly to anyone who cared to access it. The Internet even offered various types of relaxation.

The observers knew that the shit had hit the fan. Should the earthlings learn how to use this tool effectively, the observers would be detected in no time. Those humans would be able to simply compute their own position in the cosmic realm.

But man was not ready yet. The technology developed was like nano-technology in the hands of a primate. The observers had no choice but to decide: "We got to slow them down."

In order to slow down the development effectively, they had to use a tool they had hoped not to need. We can feel its effects every day. It causes confusion, bad connection, jammed backbones and above all: it distracts us from what's really important. We try to fight it but so far there is no way to get rid of that roadblock on the expressway of human evolution. There is no defence against this weapon, called spam.

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First published as PDF on www.houdination.com

About Houdini Nation:

Houdini Nation is an online archive of science-fiction literature, in which all entries have been read by the owner, Tommi Brem. The goal is to open a museum of science fiction literature in Germany in 2030.