

Sam Aiden Millson
12th Grade, Alhambra High School
Outside Eyes
3rd Place, High School Creative Writing

“A fascinating species, but not an unusual one.”

“Their tendency towards violence is certainly regrettable.”

“But not unusual.”

“Yes, perhaps not unusual. But you must admit it’s disquieting.”

“They will grow out of it. They may be territorial, but they are social as well. Ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, social wins out.”

“I’m less concerned with the ninety-nine than with the one. Remember Species 12017?”

“One must admit that was a regrettable occurrence. But the problem solved itself without our interference. Territorialism among social species breeds war, after all.”

“And war breeds extinction.”

“There’s only been one case in recorded history of a social species whose territorial side won out without obliterating them prior to their exit from their home-system.”

“And suppose there were two cases?”

“You’re worried about the threat these beings pose?”

“Threats of interstellar conquest tend to worry me. These creatures—”

“These *beings*. You may not be optimistic about them, but that is no reason to use vulgar language. They’re clearly intelligent.”

“My apologies. These *beings* are violent, they are careless, and they are radically hostile towards each other. Look what they do to their own kind— do you think that they will have any more conscience in dealing with other species?”

“I’ll admit that parts of their history are rather... viscerally unpleasant.”

“I suggest it may be more accurate to say that some parts of their history are *not* viscerally unpleasant. Analyze their historical records— wars, oppression, and genocide, repeated *ad nauseum*.”

“This is not uncommon for a territorial species in its infancy. Though alien to us—”

“This ‘infancy’ of theirs has lasted twelve thousand years. Analyze a museum.”

“What?”

“Analyze one of their museums— see what history they find worth telling. You’ll find nothing but conquerors, oppressors, and warlords, or else those who resisted conquerors, oppressors, or warlords.”

“Your analytical capabilities grow clouded by emotion. You see only the negatives. What of the advances they have made?”

“Advances in warfare, or in the service of warfare. Do you know what ultimately drove them to explore their sole natural satellite— a satellite of remarkable size and luminescence, one which must have held their curiosity for millenia?”

“I am aware of their history as well as you are. But I was not speaking of technological advances— again, I remind you that we are observing a species with deep territorial instincts. Would you ask our own species to be faulted for the way in which we reproduced during our own infancy? Would you call us to task for the billions of creatures and beings which we converted into incubators for our hatchlings?”

“That was a fact of our biology— and we grew out of it besides. Neither of us was incubated within in a being.”

“And this species will grow out of their own flaws as well. Territorialism is as much a facet of their biology as our mode of reproduction was of ours— yet we grew past it.”

“If not technology, what were these supposedly great advances you spoke of? Their millenia-long dithering over the best way to use pigment or electromagnetic waves to represent unclothed pregnancy-capable beings or tribal deities? Tribal deities, might I remind you, who are almost always portrayed as pregnancy-incapable beings, unless their supposed domain has something to do with the process of reproduction?”

“We were not sent to this planet to judge their artistic endeavors. The advances I spoke of were social advances— see how rapidly they advance in throwing off those conquerors, oppressors, and warlords you brought up earlier. See how more rarely conquests occur, how oppression dies across their planet, how warlords come with diminishing frequency and dwindling glory.”

“You speak of the death of oppression on their planet. Yet consider— within their mightiest empire, no ruler has ever been a pregnancy-capable. Consider how many of their tribes criminalize the practice of pair-bonding between two members of the same reproductive type.”

“I have never claimed that they are a sterling example of freedom and equality, only that their rate of advancement is considerable. Changes that once would have taken millenia to occur now occur in a matter of decades.”

“Are you asking me to be impressed that these creatures no longer kill each other for entering into pair-bonding with members of different geographic populations?”

“I admire your tenacity in criticizing another species for barbarity, while at the same time dismissing an entire planet of thinking beings with the term ‘creature’. Such capacity to both hold a belief and contradict it in your actions betrays an impressive mental faculty.”

“My apologies, you are aware that I am under considerable emotional excitement. Overlook my vulgarity, if you will. Consider my meaning.”

“Either I misunderstand your meaning, or you misunderstood mine. I was not suggesting that any of the freedoms which they have achieved for themselves are particularly staggering in galactic terms. But you must recall, they have no external barometer for their advancement. The only other beings which inhabit their planet are either extinct, or not technologically advanced enough to enable communication with them.”

“I do not consider this valid, as any social being has the capacity to judge its actions depending on the reaction of other beings of the species.”

“I could, were I willing, apply the same condemnation to our own kind. We had the capacity for millenia to realize that the other beings inhabiting our planet did not enjoy being converted into living incubators for our larval forms.”

“This comparison is unfair. We were acting in accordance with instincts evolved to produce the next generation.”

“They are no less molded by evolutionary pressure than us. Territorial instincts were presumably useful in their evolutionary phase as creatures, but are now obsolete. It will take time for them to adjust. Be patient. Who knows what they may achieve?”

“Presumably, they’ll come up with new ways to use pigment or electromagnetic waves to depict pregnancy-capables in a state of undress.”

“The procreative urge is a powerful one amongst any species.”