

A PLANET CALLED NOPTER

As far as planets go, Nopter was so-so. And as far as species go, we were...well, let us just say that we were not quite there yet.

It is true that on Nopter we had universal education, healthcare and whatnot. And it is also true that we were swimming in peace, civilization, scientific progress et cetera. But there was one gigantic, colossal fault with our species which trumped all the advantages: our species was slow to grow up. Very slow. It took us an awfully long time.

I, Tik-Tik, knew from direct experience. Personal exposure. First-hand knowledge. I can state without the least hesitation that my growth was stunted. And I was not the only one with the problem. My pigtailed friend Nib-Nib fared as badly as I. In fact, all around us, children were growing up at a slow,

sluggish, dawdling rate. At an average, we grew by a quarter of an inch or so a year. A few lucky ones sometimes hit a full half-inch. Nib-Nib and I never broke any records, alas. In comparison to other non-indigenous planetary species—such as the cat—we were far inferior. They became fully grown at one



year of age. At eight years we were quite as helpless and retarded as one-month-old kittens.

The adults of our species enjoyed all kinds of freedom on Nopter. They could eat what they fancied and leave what they disliked untouched. They could stay in or go out at will, and remain outdoors all they wished. All this, of course, was denied to us, the small ones of the species. It was some kind of age discrimination practised on Nopter against the young. There were just too many reasons why childhood was not the most sought-after stage in life, and why I decided that this state of affairs should not be allowed to continue unchallenged and uncured.