

天主教輔仁大學英國語文學系學士班畢業成果
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
GRADUATION PROJECT 2023

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Translation Project: Give the Family My Love

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Learning
Outcome
Demonstration

Date
2023
5/22



幫我向家人問好
GIVE THE FAMILY MY LOVE

By A. T. GREENBLATT

A Short Story Translation Project (5320 Words)

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2019 Nebula Award Winner
For Best Short Story

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1. *Give the Family My Love*, (Clarkesworld Magazine) Story link:

https://clarkesworldmagazine.com/greenblatt_02_19/

2. Digital Artist: Amir Zand website link: <https://amirzandartist.com/>

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Introduction

This is a short science fiction story narrated in the first-person perspective, in the form of voice messages. It tells the tale of a human anthropologist who becomes the last astronaut on Earth in order to save it from destruction. The protagonist, Hazel, an asthmatic and pessimistic individual, embarks on an adventure to retrieve lost research data of humanity by venturing into an alien repository known as "the Library," which archives data from various solar systems. She left several recorded messages for their brother, and the story unfolds gradually through these audio transmissions, filled with fascinating imagination and heartfelt prose.

這部篇幅僅 5320 字的短篇科幻故事，採以第一人稱的視角敘事，以語音訊息的口吻，訴說一個人類學家，成為地球上的最後一位太空人，為了挽救地球滅亡的故事。主角身為一名患有氣喘，個性悲觀厭世的人類學家，為了找回人類遺失的研究資料，冒險進入外星人所謂，館藏了各個太陽系資料的資料庫。在探訪資料庫的過程中，留下了一則則錄音給哥哥的音訊，故事隨著音訊慢慢地展開，充滿了新奇的幻想和真摯的文字。

P.S: Since the story was being written as several voice messages, for the purpose of clarification, I would refer to the 7 paragraphs as seven voice messages in my translation, such as voice message 1, voice message 2, etc.

PULCHRITUDO

VERITAS

幫我向家人問好

[語音訊息 1]

掃羅，我後悔來到外太空了。從銀河系的另一端跟你說聲嗨

然後，驚喜吧！我知道當你說「保持聯絡」的時候，應該沒有預期會是這麼久才收到訊息。不過坦白說，這星球使我完全沒有想傳訊息的感覺，反而錄一些碎碎念的語音訊息還比較有感覺.....

所以...我猜你應該想知道這裡長怎麼樣吧？簡單來說就是很多石頭，除了遠方一個方向以外，四面八方就只有石頭，眼見都是虛無。大氣中濃密綠色的雲霧，搞得好像我在穿過，被綠藻污染的水塘一樣。雖然外面的空氣跟我之間隔著價值八千五百萬的太空裝，但說實話，我覺得我快窒息了。而我離目的地還有 900 公尺遠，除了我的雙腳以外，沒有其他東西可以帶我到那裡了。

所以啊，我才會在這裡。沒做什麼，就走路而已。

掃羅，我很抱歉傳這樣的訊息給你。但如果我再不跟某人說說話，額...或是找個人表達精神崩潰的話，我一定到不了資料庫。我更不可能傳這種訊息給團隊的那群男生。至少，如果是傳給你，你不會批評我，你知道情緒潰堤是我消化焦慮的過程之一。

850 公尺。掃羅，我早該聽你的。

我知道這聽起來還是很俗套，但我參加過太多晚餐聚會了，聽太多故事了，特別是每次他們聽到，我可能是地球上最後一個太空人的那種表情，我見多了。至少我現在有完美的藉口，可以推辭各種聚餐了吧？喔！我很想去，但我現在距離地球 32.5 光年之遠喔，幫我跟你的家人問好吧。

當然啦，他們還要等至少六個多月才會收到我的訊息。

哇，想想其實蠻悲哀的。看吧，這就是為什麼我跟研發處的人說，不要跟我解釋太多數據，或給我太多資訊。但他們是群書呆子，你懂嗎，他們根本就忍不住。即使他們的用意是好的，他們就是會忍不住分享資訊，像是水滿了非溢出來不可。而我聽了又忘不掉。

750 公尺

好消息是我現在看得到資料庫了。所以如果我死在這裡，離入口只差 742 公尺遠，至少我可以死得瞑目，知道我是地球上唯一親眼見證過，這巨大建築體的人類了。

喔天哪掃羅，認真想想我可能真的會死在這裡。不是我從來沒有想過，就只是當你橫跨一個陌生險惡的外星球的時候，才會真的意識到自己有可能會死吧

而且，我的超貴太空裝開始發出一些令人擔心的嗶嗶聲了。感覺是太空裝出現異常了。

675 公尺。天哪掃羅，我真的希望這趟旅程是值得的。

喔對了，我跟你說過資料庫了嗎？好像沒什麼講過吧？我聊這個話題也不過才多久？好幾年而已吧。不過我跟你說，跟我想的不太一樣耶。聽起來可能很蠢，但是我們不都想像外星基地，就應該要看起來很「外星」嗎？不該是像城堡或寺廟一樣，有很高聳的牆跟許多的尖塔之類的吧。好啦掃羅別笑了（我知道你正在笑我，或至少六個月後的你在笑我）我還是不後悔小時候看的那些太多想像力的科幻故事。我只會後悔看太少而已。

我猜你應該想知道資料庫長怎樣。嗯...我爬過的高山，根本這個建築體比起來，根本是小蟻丘。不過他也長得有點像座山，很醜又歪歪斜斜的，有很多奇怪的窗戶，跟像是無限延伸的山壁。有的角度看起來平滑光亮，有的稜線看起來又粗糙堅硬。看了就讓我發毛。

不過說真的也不是那麼令人意外。這是個外星球的世界，充滿了外星人的建築和沒那麼外星的知識等著我們去探索跟學習。資訊和知識多到不是我們天馬行空的智人可以想像的。

500 公尺

掃羅，我開始有點擔心我的太空衣了。我左手手肘的地方不能彎了。也不是說我需要彎左邊的手肘才能走路，但就是會讓我有點焦慮，會陷入恐慌的那種焦慮。喔天哪，如果我可以利用資料庫管理員的科技抵達那裡就好了。但現在，我只能用人類令人懷疑的技術幫助我前進最後的幾百公尺。不過這是管理員讓我們進入的條件：你們要讓你們的代表穿過險惡的環境，平安的送至入口處（，才能進入）。」結果呢，現在在我超貴的太空衣外面，不是高得不可思議的高壓大氣環境，就是腐蝕性氣體，或是在地表明暗之間波動的極端高溫，等等各種的危險。而且，地面的坑坑疤疤也多到可以隨時讓你嚇一跳。

我不知道如果我跌倒會發生什麼事。我根本不敢想。我本來就不是理科組的，更不會想從現在開始搞懂跌倒的物理原理。

350 公尺

我是說，我參與計劃的時候就知道這些風險了。我早就知道這會是整趟旅程最艱難的部分。（我是說，會有多難？那些管理員早就研究出在幾個月內，旅行光年之遠的技術了。而且對他們而言還只是小兒科。）但我是這個任務的最佳人選，而掃羅，我一定要做點什麼。我知道你不認同我，但我還沒放棄人類的未來。這不是在逃避。

我真希望我現在後悔還來得及，因為我的太空裝裡面開始出現一層薄薄的塵土了，喔我的天哪。

250 公尺

掃羅不要吵啦！我可以聽得到你會用你那個大哥的口氣跟我說：不是不行恐慌荷瑟，但現在不是恐慌的時機！就像每次小的時候你會跟我說的一樣。但你是對的，我不能恐慌，因為現在能發生，比死更糟的事情，就是因為粉塵而氣喘發作。好，好，好我需要保持冷靜，繼續專心，保持前進。

175 公尺

我的太空裝絕對有出問題。太空裝裡面的粉塵已經從「薄薄的」開始變成「厚厚的」了，我已經要分不出來我在吸入什麼了

別恐慌，荷瑟。

不要恐慌，不要恐慌，不要恐慌。

絕對不能恐慌。我在想像研發部的書呆子，聽到我說這件事的時候的反應。他們如果聽到他們的寶貝設計不如預期表現，一定會一臉崩潰。很好，這樣可以避免過度換氣。當你的最佳人選是個患有氣喘的人類學家時，這就是無法避免的事。

100 公尺

好，我快到了。我可以看到門口了。這個太空裝計算錯誤的可悲理由，只要在支撐我幾分鐘就夠了。我只需要再走幾步路就好了。很快我就可以安全的抵達裡面，然後就又可以拿到我寶貝，寶貝的氣喘吸入器了。

75 公尺

嗯，希望他們會讓我進入。

所以掃羅...事情其實是這樣的。管理員其實從來沒有給我們保證會讓我進去。他們說這是進駐在資料庫裡的管理員才能決定。（很顯然的，我遇到的管理員還有分不同級別，而之前同我一起旅遊的，跟即將要遇到的不一樣，兩個級別的想法可能意見不同）不過搜索級別的管理員還是把我載到了這裡，所以我想應該是有高機會可以進入的，對吧？

是這樣的，這個**蠢斃**了的太空裝其實原本不只要幫助我撐到資料庫的，而是進不去的話，有能力幫助我遣返。但看來我的保護措施有來不及彌補的漏洞呢。

25 公尺

抱歉我沒在離開前先跟你說清楚，但其實我也沒有真的很抱歉。能在這裡獲得的知識跟資料是值得我冒險的。是值得八千五百萬的人口冒的險。如果我死在路上的話，雖然很慘，但沒關係的，至少我們試過了。

10 公尺

掃羅我不感到抱歉，就只是真的很害怕。

希望管理員願意讓我進去，但你如果沒有在收到我的下一則訊息了，你就知道發生什麼事了，幫我跟心愛的家人問好。

好吧，是時候了。

...

[語音訊息 2]

掃羅你有過一見鐘情的感覺嗎？

我知道你和凰彼此相愛。也看過你們彼此凝視的樣子。但你還記得當你看到她，然後心想「哇天哪，就是她了，我終於找到她了。」的那個時刻嗎。

當我一看到資料庫時...就明白了...那種終於找到了的感覺，真是不可思議。

而且...它其實蠻難形容的。有點像它的建築體外部，端看你看它的角度會不斷地有所變化。

當我離開隔離室的時候（或至少，我猜是隔離室的空間？），我踏進有著微光，且安靜的大廳空間。資料庫的資料管理員——我後來才知道他們比較喜歡被稱為館藏員，因為他們不是橫跨宇宙之間蒐集資料的管理員——正在這個大空間裡轉來轉去。他們看起來就很像我們在地球上遇到，搜集資料的管理員。他們都有著高大、瘦長，像人類一樣的身體，而且都有著會發光、長長的觸鬚，是資料管理員沒有的（好像沒有吧？）。他們的觸鬚一直向下延伸到，展開有十隻腳指的腳上。

這個房間其實意外的空曠，就只有房間中央一些物件跟擺設，看起來像是藝術品也可能是一些家具，書櫃或椅子什麼的。就，你知道的，有點像在家鄉的圖書館一樣。

我的呼吸開始變得比較順暢了。經歷過外面熾熱的地獄之後，我的吸入器終於開始發揮效用。這時房間內的光線突然變了。我旁邊長出了跟高樓一樣高的蕨類植物，而且聞起來有點啤酒花的味道，有著暗沈的紫色陰影。接著，房間又變得非常非常的潮濕。四周也瞬間長滿了植物。就連管理員，噢，我是指館藏員都...變了。他們現在變成只有四隻腳，和兩隻蓋滿了茂密白髮的手。

我伸出手，碰了一下在我旁邊的蕨類植物。摸起來的觸感出乎我的意料，感覺就像輕觸帶刺的肥皂泡泡一樣。我更沒有預期到，牠還伸出牠的枝葉，輕觸了一下我的額頭。

接著我敢發誓，但我也不是很確定，因為突然整個房間都變了。一瞬間，我站在看似冰封的海洋上顫抖，浮冰之下有極光。空氣乾燥得讓人想流鼻血，聞起來還有鐵鏽的味道。我可以看到冰的下面有蒼白的東西在移動。而館藏者們變成了像是半透明的球體，漂浮在離地一公尺的空中。

而房間就這樣一直不斷的變化。很嚇人，但同時也很不可思議呢，掃羅。

所以我就像個傻瓜一樣，站在原地發呆。震懾的不敢移動的同時，也很努力地消化這一切。等到我終於把下巴收起來的時候，才注意到有兩個東西是沒有變的。首先，館藏者們看起來一直都軟軟的，觸手如橡膠般在空中飄動。而空中的光點也依舊沒有移動過。

阿不對啦，我形容的不夠完整。我忘了提到那些光點了。空中有成千的光點像是一顆顆星星一樣，散落在房間的各處飄動，漂浮懸掛在半空中。我想就是這

些光點讓房間瞬間產生變化的，因為每當館藏員上前去，用他們的觸手輕觸其中一個光點的時候，唰！整個房間的場景就變了。

聽著囉：當我終於鼓起勇氣問一個經過的館藏者，那些光點是什麼，他回答我說：「這些是所有現今已知、並值得我們研究的太陽系。」

雖然我很想說，天哪我已經死了，到天堂了吧。但我浮誇的老梗快不夠我用了，免強夠支撐我到資料庫就了不起了。

喔等等不對，我還有一個真的很老套的可以用。

我站在大廳裡發呆了好一陣子，可能有點太久了，但其實是因為我在試著鼓起勇氣跟主責館藏員自我介紹。但反倒我還沒上前，館藏員們就主動來歡迎我了。這是我經歷過有生以來最有壓力的對話了。我的手發抖到堪比有九級芮氏規模，而吸入器的類固醇跟純粹的恐慌更是幫倒忙的大功臣。

掃羅我跟你說，館藏員真的不是可以隨隨便便的。真的，最好不要跟他們槓上。不要違背他們，不要理直氣壯，不要有任何一絲的不尊重。他們看起來也許很柔軟，但他們可以輕易的把你解離到原子不剩，或把你沒大沒小的腦袋瓜變成一塊記憶面板，隨便塞在某個放滿無聊資訊的書架上，大概永遠都不會有找到你。而且還會故意讓你保持意識清楚。

或者只要讓你有一點點感知能力，夠你發瘋就好了，我想。

幸好我們的談話蠻短的。我猜，應該是因為主責館藏員覺得我還算夠格吧，然後，就把非常**非常**有限的資料庫權限給了我。當他們引導我到我們的太陽系資料區的時候，掃羅我真希望你也在這，這樣你就可以幫我拍照，捕捉我當下的反應。我覺得你一定會形容「太經典了」。因為光看這個空間的大小，就夠把一整個小鎮給塞進來了。

而且跟你說喔，館藏員還表示歉意的說道：「請原諒我們資料不齊全，我們才剛開始研究你們。並且我們認為用實體的方式呈現我們的研究資料，或許比較方便你瀏覽。」他們補充道：「希望妳能在這微薄的館藏中找到妳所需的資訊。」

不過說真的，他們擁有的資訊，八成遠超過，我們自己所擁有的資料了

其實我也是這麼指望的。

•••

[語音訊息 3]

這裡的一切都好怪喔掃羅。光線的顏色都有點淡，空氣的味道也好不尋常。牆面跟層架都看似有點彎曲。一切都好陌生而且非常的外星。

真的好奇妙。

館藏員設置了一個看起來很像一般套房的空間，在館藏海洋珊瑚資訊的角落裡。空間裡有流水和人造陽光，跟完整 11 季的風流軍醫俏護士錄影帶，在一台看起來像是來自 1980 年代的電視上播放著。我的理論是，我的生活空間可能是某個實習館藏員的研究報告成果，但我也只是在用自己的想像在解讀這個空間。從正面的角度來看，如果他們挑的 80 年代，風流軍醫俏護士絕對是比較不糟的選擇了。

我蠻確定再過幾週，我就會開始出現想家的症狀，然後開始傳給你更多更長，而且可能很多碎碎念的訊息，質疑自己人生中，使自己走到這一部的每個選擇。但現在，待在資料庫中，其實感覺壓力還蠻釋放的。有種「應該來打個電話給我老哥，因為我的新套房有點太安境了」的氛圍。

喔，我今天有收到你的第一則訊息了。還記得你六個月前，大概在我離開後三天錄音的訊息嗎？我知道你一定很火大，但掃羅說真的，「一個背叛大家、迷戀外星人、可笑、沒用、沒骨氣的人」，就是你花了三天才想得出來，可以形容我最好的形容詞了嗎？

我知道你其實不是真的那麼生氣。我知道你只是一半生我的氣，一半生我們快毀滅的地球的氣，一半又生...唉

我也有收到一則凰的訊息。他跟我說了你們近期流產的事。掃羅我真的很替你感到難過。有天你們兩個人一定會是全世界最棒的父母的。我對你們的信心，比我對你的國際林地復育計畫更有信心，而我相信你的計畫也同樣肯定會成功的。

我也能理解你為什麼會覺得我拋棄了你們和地球，只為了躲到一個一塵不染的資料庫，穩固又安全的地方。但我需要來到這裡。我對於資料管理員有一個理論。想聽嗎？反正你也選不了，我就是要跟你們講。

聽著，我越花時間跟他們相處，我越覺得他們如果想要毀滅我們的話早就做了。但他們並沒有。也就是說他們費了好大的一番功夫，就只為了研究我們，還有跟對的人做接觸。問我們這些人一些很關鍵的問題，像是：「我們成功在這間大學的儲藏室被燒毀前，或在那個資料庫被淹沒前，把資料給保存下來了。你們想要取回這些資料嗎？」這些問題說服我們促成這趟的任務計畫。

也就驅使著我相信著，他們是想要幫助我們的。

掃羅我知道你肯定在翻白眼。我有跟你說過你這樣很像自以為憂鬱的青少年嗎？對，我知道我說過。但聽我說，我正試著再跟你說很重要的事情。

拜託了。

你還記得我們第一次因為這趟任務吵架的時候嗎？你說任何當地球的生態在崩解的時候出現的人都不可信。我認同。直到我遇到的第一個資料管理員跟我說，資料庫的設置，是為了宇宙中一切有感知能力的生物所建立的曙光，是一個研究者可以造訪，並學習新的發現和過去的錯誤的地方。

我都可以聽到你說：「然後你就天真盲目的相信他們了嗎？荷瑟？」不，掃羅，我並沒有。在我被挑選執行這項瘋狂的任務之前，身為一名地球僅存的人類學家，專攻跨文化交流與互動的我，只是在場幫忙確認第一接觸過程的順利而已。我對於成為太空人沒有絲毫的興趣。太空旅行對我而言，一直就感覺風險很高又很不舒服。但資料管理員對我致力文化保存的堅持和認真印象深刻。太空計畫署也被我不可思議的記憶力給驚奇到。我最後也被說服，如果我不前往，別人去的時候就會犯錯，然後我們就可以在人類危機的列表中，「環境浩劫」的悲劇上方，再加上一筆「外星接觸災難」了。

懂了嗎掃羅，沒有什麼我在資料庫看到的事情，是我有所保留沒跟你說的，因為管理員們所擁有的高科技，完全有能力毀滅我們低層級的未開發文明。

但想也知道，這沒辦法阻止那些研發部的人，一直不停的傳訊息給我，要我小心的紀錄觀察到的一切，再把紀錄資訊回傳給他們。雖然我的任務是要找回任何，能幫助我們拯救自己的研究和歷史資料。但我覺得他們也希望我可以回報一些外星科技的資料之類的。我真的很想直接傳一封訊息給他們說：「抱歉書呆子們，這裡的一切都是魔法。」

不過掃羅，我不會這麼做的。我的正式報告會是很直白而且專業的。你知道的，兩倍的數據和資訊，少一半的譏諷。不過我應該還是會繼續傳這種訊息給你，至少還會傳一陣子。繼續澄清為什麼這不是我「逃家」的理由。

真的，這都只是為了躲避芝加哥混亂的交通而已。

開玩笑的。其實是因為這裡有遼闊的火海平原。一名氣喘研究者在她出征前，所能忍受的煙霧和粉塵，也就這麼多而已。

半開玩笑的。

我有著一整列的清單，列滿了要替在地球的科學家研究的事。但我覺得今天應該差不多可以收工了。環看著這一切不可勝數的知識和資訊讓我意識到我們失去了多少。我不求能夠解答，這些管理員怎麼能夠拯救到如此多的資料。只希望他們有保存到我要找的研究資料。

我有說過整趟計畫，其實有多指望著單純的盼望嗎？

[語音訊息 4]

嘿掃羅，我想我迷失了。但也不完全是這樣，反正我的記憶是不會讓我迷路的，但我完全可以想像自己迷失了的感覺。一排又一排的記憶儲存面板看起來都一樣。如果沒有仔細注意到館藏員的編碼，是分不出差別的。我其實也讀不懂那些編碼，因為他們看起來就像一個個小小的雕像，我只能記得雕像之間些微的差異。幸好館藏員很友善的給了我一張基本的地圖，圖上有簡單的翻譯指示，能教我如何找到各樣資訊。只不過管理員的簡單，跟人類的簡單也是完全不同的層級。

天哪，我以為拿到研究資料會是這趟旅程中最簡單的部分，但我現在可能連單細胞有機體的資料區都走不出來了。所以，幫我跟家人問好吧。

我知道你在想什麼。對，我就是知道。你在想：你為什麼不回來呢荷瑟？家裡的幼苗需要幫忙啊。因為我們已經為這件事吵了多久，十年了吧？

不，不對，九年才對，10個月又二十七天，自從那次因著晚餐吵架開始。

對，掃羅。我的記憶力總是該死的跟我作對，越不想記得就記得越清楚。

對了，我今天收到你的第二則訊息了。我接受你的道歉了。但掃羅我沒辦法回去了。我才剛開始我的資料重拾計畫。許多重要的知識和資訊都在過去的十年內被銷毀了。

像是隆博士的研究。如果這裡有，我一定要找到。

唉，天哪，這則訊息有夠悲觀的。嘿，跟你講一點今天學到比較酷的東西吧；這裡廚房的櫥櫃能變出任何我想像的食物出來，而且起居室裡書架上，空白的二十本書也會自動變成任何我想閱讀的書籍。跟真的魔法一樣。這裡有著一切生活所需，和超出我所能求的一切書籍了。

掃羅我不會回家了。

[語音訊息 5]

嗯...已經過了一週而我依舊還沒找到隆博士的研究，但我找到了很多很有趣的東西。像是太陽能交通工具的專利跟實際可行的概念、或是需要兩倍的二氧化碳才能行光合作用的玉米農作物研究報告。我們曾擁有好多的機會，能夠阻止我們的問題惡化。唉...掃羅，我們好需要它們。

說實話，這裡豐富的資訊真的是多到無法想像。館藏員根本就是宇宙中最有系統的囤積狂。他們保存的資料，從道路建設計畫，到服飾業的包裝和行銷策略都有。而且特別的是，每次我啟動一塊記憶儲存面板，資料就會立體的投射到我的周圍。有時候整個走道都會轉變，然後我就會真的被淹沒在資訊當中。這也是為什麼自從上一則訊息之後我已經有一段時間沒傳訊息了。對此有點抱歉了掃羅。

別笑，但我昨天花了一整天在看兒童文學的區域。因為那裡所有的故事都像活過來一樣；不管是覆滿了藤蔓的老舊古堡、巧克力工廠或者《小火車做到了》都栩栩如生。每個故事都棒極了掃羅。也讓人感到非常的令人沮喪。因為當我坐在那裡被這些充滿著希望的故事環繞著的時候，我突然意識到你的孫子，可能再沒有機會認識這些故事了。對，我知道你會不認同。但我是個讀了很多書的人類學家，又是個很害怕的悲觀主義者。

我問了一個館藏者他們是不是都這樣收藏資訊的。結果他們笑了，說希望我不會被他們冒犯到，便展示給我看了，大概只有一本愛情小說平裝書大小的資料儲存面板。說這一塊面板裡就儲存了整間資料庫所有的資訊了。

館藏者解釋說：「我們的資訊若不用這樣的方式呈現，你便無法吸收。」「你們的搜尋管理系統若不是太原始，就是太主觀分類了」

但你們光是要蓋好資料庫應該就很久了吧？

他們說「不會」，但他們知道我看起來沒被說服。「用魔法蓋的」他們補充道。

掃羅我覺得這些外星科學家一定有在偷聽我們的語音訊息。所以無論如何，錄回訊的時候，千萬別說些不想要被留存千古的話。

我又問：那為什麼資料庫這麼大呢？

而掃羅，故事就從這裡開始變得蠻難過得了。

這個杳無人煙，如今一片荒蕪的星球，也是資料庫的所在地，他們告訴我它曾經生機盎然、充滿了生命力。這裡曾有過數十億的資料管理員。現在卻只剩幾千個了。在他們成為已知的宇宙的資料管理者之前，管理員也曾使他們的星球滅亡過。

我遇到的第一個資料管理員曾跟我說過，這個資料庫期望成為銀河中各樣生物的指路燈。不過現在我了解，他不僅僅是一個指路燈而已。掃羅，資料庫之所以這麼大的原因，是因為大部分的資料管理員跟館藏者也都生活在這裡。

他們跟我們一樣無法拯救自己的星球。

我幾乎可以聽的到你在問我，那我為什麼還要來到這個地方，特別是我又對未來偏執的覺得沒什麼希望。但我真的很難回答你老兄。而我也不斷的用不直接，又碎碎念的方法在試著跟你解釋我...

我...

掃羅我再打給你。我想我找到隆博士的研究了。

[語音訊息 6]

我找到了，天哪，我真的找到了，放下心中的一顆大石頭了。我耗盡了我的生命才找到的。不掃羅，我沒有在誇飾。別再翻我白眼了。

還記得當我說館藏員關藏的資訊都是有知覺的嗎？嗯掃羅，只能說她真的很有知覺。

當我啟動那塊資料儲存面板的時候，隆博士本人就浮現在眼前，清楚到連她有點灰白的髮絲、指甲的色澤都逼真的好似真人一樣。我或許應該警覺到，當她看到我的時候看似不是太愉快，但我實在是太興奮了。

我開口問她「你是祐實隆博士嗎？」（其實比較像急切的逼問）

他回覆我「從出生到 53 歲都沒變」

「太好了！我真高興終於見到你了隆博士。我有好多問題想問你。被館藏者館藏在這裡是什麼感覺？等等，不對，你可以先跟我說說你的林地復育研究嗎？」

出於某種原因掃羅，我滔滔不絕地講話沒有讓他感到親切。她問了我「為什麼？」她他看起來不是很信任我。

嗯，首先，因為老家地球的狀況不是很好。大部分的北大西洋雨林都被各樣的乾旱、野火給摧毀了。包含妳原先在 UBC 的研究成果。

她並沒有感到意外，只是看似有點憂傷。「那你其他的隊員呢？嗯...你是...？」

喔，可以稱呼我「何瑟史密斯」，就只有我。

她皺了眉頭，臉上顯得更疑惑不確定了。「他們只送了一名太空人嗎？」「為什麼？」

「喔，是因為資源和資金的不足。是這年頭極度短缺的東西」

「那為什麼是你？」

「因為我也是一名研究員，而且我致力於保存人類文明文化。另外，也因為我有非常好的記憶力，特別是資料和各種細節，而且我也不需要電池就能運作。」

隆挑了一下眉毛。突然半空中浮現一塊資料儲存面板在她的手上。然後他就盯著面板看了一陣子。

「你在做什麼？」我問。心裏感覺到，事情似乎沒有想的簡單。

「我在讀你的相關資料，學術期刊和其他的東西。身為資料庫的一部份，何瑟女士...不好意思，我是說...何瑟博士，表示我也可以查閱其他的資料。」

突然之間，我就知道等下話題的方向會怎麼進行了。感覺就會像那些遭透了的晚餐派對一樣。那種當別人問我為什麼不生小孩之後，尷尬的沈默。但我什麼也做不了，就只能努力抑制著自己不要去咬手指甲。在全人類的文化裡，沒有什麼比站在別人旁邊，只能等著別人讀你種種的功績更不舒服的事了。

但如果人類學交會了我任何東西掃羅，那就是人類永遠都有可能做出，令你意想不到的舉動。

唉...隆博士輕輕的嘆了一聲後，手上的資料版就從手中消失了。「你看待人性的角度相當的悲觀呢。」

我總是好討厭這樣的對話，所以我就把手插進口袋然後說「我只是從歷史演進的角度提出看法而已」

她點了點頭。「姑且不管你怎麼會這麼想。我想我也認同。」

掃羅我覺得蠻意外的，「所以妳願意跟我說說妳的研究嗎？」

隆又認真的盯著我看了一下。用一種在實驗室裡面，觀察試管在做分析的時候才會露出的眼神看著我。

「不願意」

她真的看著我然後就只說了聲「不願意」。就為了這趟研究計畫，我已經旅行了 32 又半個光年。我不跟你開玩笑掃羅，有一瞬間我差點就想把面板給砸了。

「你是認真的嗎？」我問她

「我是認真的，史密斯博士。我的職業生涯中，我已經花了大半輩子的時間在跟政治家、企業家、研發人員、農夫爭權奪利。所有那些不願意讓自己擁有的土地回歸自然，或者不願試著修復我們對土地造成傷害的人，我都吵過了。想摧毀我的研究的人不計其數。

「我不是來摧毀你的研究的，隆博士。我已經為了這份研究犧牲太多了。」

「那你犧牲了什麼呢，史密斯博士？」

「地球。一切我所知跟我愛的人。我已經犧牲我的生命就為了要得到這份資訊了！」回想起來，當時的我可能有點太激動了。

她回答我說：「不，那是逃避問題。」你敢相信嗎掃羅，對，她真的這樣對我說。「妳來這裡真正的原因是什麼？」

我嘆了口氣之後，就用了一句你的老話：「因著我們對於未來的盼望，驅使著我們前進。」

「那你對什麼抱持著盼望呢？史密斯博士？因為從我剛剛讀到的內容來看，妳並不對未來抱持著什麼希望。」

我不知道我還能怎麼辦了。所以呢掃羅，我就跟她說了。我跟他說了一切我一直想跟你說的事。

[語音訊息 7]

在我的生命裡其實沒幾件太值得回想的事。我想，硬要說的話，也大多都是回頭看才想起來的幾個，跟其他人差不多的那種美好回憶吧。我現在要說的也差不多是這種。我想，你應該還記得十年前，野火焚燒的那年夏天吧？令人難以忘懷呢。

我才剛拿到我的第一個博士文憑，而北華盛頓州的野火不停止地在燃燒。當時有一個登山步道，雖然離火源還有段安全距離，卻可以清楚的見證歷史上最嚴重的一場野火。大概離學校開車只有一小時遠的距離。我感到害怕又擔心的同時，又很好奇。所以我就心想，管他的。

我找了個男生陪我一起去，不，掃羅，你並沒有見過他。

即使粉塵使我們怯步，我們還是一起爬了那段上山的步道。

我們彼此都知道這並不是愛。不過，那是那年夏天，我打破了自己許多規則中的其中一項。我喜歡他而他也喜歡著我。而在當時，這樣的一切，也就足夠了。即使世界起火燃燒，我為著有人願意陪我爬山，一起觀看世界漸漸滅亡感到滿足。

掃羅跟你說，我們對於死亡的恐懼，是會使我們做出瘋狂舉動的。

最終濃煙慢慢變得太近，讓我的氣喘開始發作。他就背著我，帶我下山了。

兩個月後，他回了科羅拉多州的老家，是個只剩幾棵樹的地方。那年整個秋天我都在哭泣跟氣喘。在看到驗孕結果後，我想也沒什麼更合理的反應了。

我拿掉了。而掃羅，我並不後悔我的決定。直到第三天 18 個小時又 12 分鐘之後，我接到你的電話。我聽你說你跟凰沒辦法生下第一胎...

掃羅，抱歉我之前沒跟你說。但我也不是真的很過意不去。我當年才二十三歲而已。雖然我可以把教科書倒背如流，但我還是一天到晚都在搞丟鑰匙，或忘記吃飯。在那年夏天後，我就覺得看不到自己有什麼未來，更不用說有著孩子的未來。我知道你會對我很失望，因為你會覺得不該輕易放棄任何一個生命。你覺得甚至連農舍裡的蟑螂都有活著的權利。掃羅你總是對地球抱持著希望。當我低頭只看到廢土的時候，你看到的卻是可以耕植的沃土。

這就是我跟隆博士說的話。我跟她說了一切你跟凰的事，也講了你們兩個無可救藥的樂觀和盼望。最後她才同意，願意跟你分享她的研究。我們討論決定每天轉錄一點內容。她的記憶面板能使整個資料庫的走道，轉變成茂密的叢林，實在讓人歎為觀止。

就把這當作我最後送你的送別禮物吧，掃羅。因為你想也知道，我是不會為著我做的決定，跟你道歉的。

第二個禮物就是，成為地球上最後一名太空人的優惠了。政府編算多到誇張的補償金。不過感覺還比較像是賠上生命的保險金，因為我要在這裡待上一段時間了。希望不是待到永遠，但這裡真的有很多很多的資料，而館藏員感覺也已經習慣收容久住的訪客了。

還記得我跟你說，我還有最一個最糟，最沒有創意的老梗嗎。最後一個，太空人最終回不了家的結局。

掃羅，我希望你用那一筆錢，好好的跟凰經營你們的家庭。

說實話，雖然依舊不覺得我們有多大的機會可以拯救地球，但你跟我不一樣。你相信我們依舊辦得到，而那對我而言就夠了。所以我會繼續尋找，並把所有有用的資訊都盡量傳回地球的，直到或許，只是或許，對我們而言真的足夠了。

所以

幫我向家人問好吧。

The Original Story by A. T. Greenblatt (Give the Family My Love)

Give the Family My Love

I'm beginning to regret my life choices, Saul. Also, hello from the edge of the galaxy.

Also, surprise! I know this isn't what you had in mind when you said "Keep in touch, Hazel" but this planet doesn't exactly invoke the muse of letter writing. The muse of extremely long voice messages however . . .

So. Want to know what's this world's like? Rocky, empty, and bleak in all directions, except one. The sky's so stormy and green it looks like I'm trudging through the bottom of an algae-infested pond. I've got this 85-million-dollar suit between me and the outside, but I swear, I'm suffocating on the atmosphere. Also, I'm 900 meters away from where I need to be with no vehicle to get me there except my own two legs.

So here I am. Walking.

Sorry to do this to you, Saul, but if I don't talk to someone—well, freak out at someone—I'm not going to make it to the Library. And like hell I'm going to send a message like this back to the boys on the program. You, at least, won't think less of me for this. You know that emotional meltdowns are part of my process.

850 meters. I should have listened to you, Saul.

And yes, I know how cliché that sounds. I've been to enough dinner parties and heard enough dinner party stories, especially once people learned that I'm possibly the last astronaut ever. At least now I have an excellent excuse for turning down invitations. "I'd *love* to come, but I'm currently thirty-two and a half lightyears away from Earth. Give your family my love."

Of course, they won't get the message until six months too late.

Wow, that's depressing. See, this is why I told the people in R&D not to give me too many facts and figures, but they're nerds, you know? They can't help themselves. Despite best intentions, it sort of spills out of them sometimes.

And it's not like I can forget.

750 meters.

The good news is I can actually see the Library. So if I died here 742 meters from the entrance, I can expire knowing I was the first human to set eyes on this massive infrastructure of information in person.

Oh god. I might actually die out here, Saul. Not that the thought hasn't crossed my mind before, but the possibility becomes a lot more tangible when you're *walking* across an inhospitable alien landscape.

Also, my fancy astronaut suit is making some worrying noises. I don't think it's supposed to sound like it's wheezing.

675 meters. God, Saul, I really hope this mission is worth it.

Have I told about the Library, yet? No, I haven't, have I? And I've only been talking about this, for what, years now? Well, you should know, it's not what I expected. Which is stupid because alien structures are supposed to be alien and not castles or temples, like with steeples and everything. Shut up, Saul. (I know you're laughing, or will be laughing at this six months from now.) I don't regret reading all those fantasy sagas when we were kids. Only that I didn't get to read more.

But you want to know what the Library looks like. Well, I've climbed mountains that feel like anthills next to this building. It sort of looks like a mountain too. An ugly misshapen mountain, full of weird windows and jutting walls. It's shiny and smooth from some angles and gritty and dull from others. It gives me the shivers.

Which is not really surprising. This is an alien world with alien architecture full of all that alien and not so alien knowledge just waiting to be learned. More information than the starry-eyed Homo sapiens ever dreamed there was possible to know.

500 meters.

Saul, I'm getting concerned about my suit. My left arm isn't bending at the elbow anymore. Not that I need my left arm to keep walking, but it's a bit disquieting, in a panic-inducing sort of way. God, this was so much easier when all I had to do was rely on the Librarians' technology to get me here. Now, I have to rely on humanity's own questionable designs to get me this last kilometer. But that's the Librarians' rules for getting in. "You have to get your representative to our entrance safely through a most unforgiving landscape." Turns out that outside of my very expensive outfit

there's an absurdly high atmospheric pressure, corrosive gases, wild temperature fluctuations between shady and light patches, et cetera, et cetera. Also, the ground is just rocky enough to surprise you.

I don't want to think about what'll happen if I trip. Can't think about it. I wasn't a physics major before, and this is not the time to start.

350 meters.

I mean, I *knew* the dangers signing up. I *knew* this was going to be the hardest part of the trip. (I mean, how could it not be? The Librarians figured out how to travel lightyears in a matter of months. And that's just for starters.) But I was the best candidate for the job and I had to do *something*, Saul. I know you think otherwise, but I haven't given up on humanity. This isn't running away.

I wish I could run right now because now there seems to be a layer of fine dust coating the inside of my suit. Oh my god.

250 meters.

Shut up, Saul. I can hear you telling me in that big brother voice of yours: "It's okay if you freak out, Hazel, just not right now" like you did when we were kids. And you're right, I can't freak out, because the worst thing that could happen right now, aside from dying, is having an asthma attack from the dust. Okay, okay, okay. I just need to keep calm, keep focused, keep moving.

175 meters.

There's definitely something wrong with my suit. The coating of dust in my suit has gone from "minimal" to "dense" and I have no idea which piece of equipment I'm breathing in.

Don't panic, Hazel.

Don't panic, don't panic, don't panic.

Can't panic. I'm picturing the R&D nerds when I tell them about this. They're going to completely melt down when they hear that their precious design didn't hold up as well as planned. Good, retaliation hyperventilating. Because that's what happens when your best candidate for the job is an asthmatic anthropologist.

100 meters.

Okay, I'm almost there. I can see the door. This faulty, pathetic excuse for a space suit only has to last me a few more minutes. I just need to keep walking. Soon I'll be safely inside and reunited with my beautiful, beautiful inhaler.

75 meters

Well. Hopefully, they let me in.

So . . . here's the thing Saul. The Librarians never actually gave us a guarantee that they would admit me. They said it was up to the Librarians who live in the Library. (Apparently, they are a different sect from the explorer Librarians that I met and traveled with and well, the two sects don't always agree.) But the explorer faction gave me a ride here, so that's got to count for something, right?

Thing is, this *stupid* suit was supposed to withstand a walk to the Library and back to the ship if I needed it. Looks like my safety net isn't catching much now.

25 meters.

I'm sorry I didn't tell you this before I left, but I'm not sorry either. The knowledge that I can potentially gain here is worth the risk. It's worth every cent of that 85 million and if I'm going to die on the steps, well that sucks. But okay, at least we tried.

10 meters.

I'm not sorry, Saul. Just scared.

Hopefully the Librarians let me in, but if you don't get another transmission from me, you know what happened. Give the rest of the family my love.

Okay. Here we go.

• • •

Have you ever been in love, Saul?

Yes, I know you love Huang. I've seen the way you look at her and she looks at you. But remember the moment when you looked at her like that for the first time and you thought, "Holy crap. This is it. I've finally found it."

Yeah. The Library, Saul, is magnificent.

And . . . difficult to describe. It's sort of like the outside of the Library. It changes depending on what angle you look at it from.

When I left the decontamination chamber (at least, I think that's what it was?), I stepped into the main room and everything was dimly lit and quiet. The Library's Librarians—which I later learned preferred to be called the Archivists because they are *not* the Librarians who travel the universe—were milling around the massive room. They looked similar to the explorer Librarians we met on Earth; tall, lanky, humanoid-like bodies. But they all had long, shimmering whiskers that the explorer Librarians didn't (couldn't?) grow out. Their whiskers went all the way down to their splayed, ten fingered feet.

The room was surprisingly empty except for these installations in the middle of the room that could either have been art or furniture. So you know, sort of like university libraries back home.

I was just starting to breathe easier, my inhaler *finally* kicking in after that walk from hell, when the light changed and suddenly I was standing next to this fern/skyscraper thing that smelled weirdly like hops and was a violent shade of purple. It became ridiculously humid and the room was filled with what I can only assume were plants. Even the Librarians—I mean, Archivists—changed. Now, they had four legs and two arms and were covered in this lush white hair.

I reached out and touched one of the ferns next to me and it was like touching a prickly soap bubble, which was not what I was expecting. But then again, I wasn't expecting it to reach out and tap me back on the forehead either.

I think I swore. I'm not sure because everything changed again. Suddenly, I was shivering and standing on something like a frozen ocean that's trapped an aurora in the floe. The air was nosebleed dry and smelled like rust and I could see pale things moving underneath the ice. The Archivists themselves had become round and translucent, floating a meter in the air.

And the room kept changing. It was terrifying . . . and completely amazing, Saul.

So there I was, gaping like an idiot, simultaneously too afraid to move and too busy trying to take all of it in. In my slack-jawed stupidity, it took me far too long to notice that two things didn't change. First, the Archivists always kept their rubbery fluidity and their whiskers. And those little lights never moved.

Crap, I'm not describing this well. I forgot to mention the lights. There were thousands of them, like miniature stars, scattered seemingly at random around the room, drifting, hanging out in midair. I think they were what made everything change, because when an Archivist would go up and touch one with their long whiskers, bam! new setting.

So get this: When I finally mustered up a little courage and asked a passing Archivist what those lights were, they said: "Every known solar system worth learning about."

I would say I've died and gone to a better place, but I've used up my quota of terrible clichés just getting here.

Wait, that's not true. I still have one awful one left.

I stood in that room for a while, longer than I should have, but the truth is I was trying to work up the nerve to introduce myself to the head Archivist. But I never did because eventually they came up and greeted me. It was one of the most nerve-wracking conversations I've ever had. Between the steroids from my inhaler and pure, uncut anxiety, my hands were like a nine on the Richter scale.

You see, Saul, the Archivists are not to be messed with. Like seriously. Do not contradict them, raise your voice, be anything less than painfully respectful. They may look squishy, but they can dismantle you down to your atoms, capture you in a memory tablet, and put your unbelieving ass on a shelf where they keep all of the boring information that no one ever checks out. And they'll keep you sentient too.

Or sentient enough. I hope.

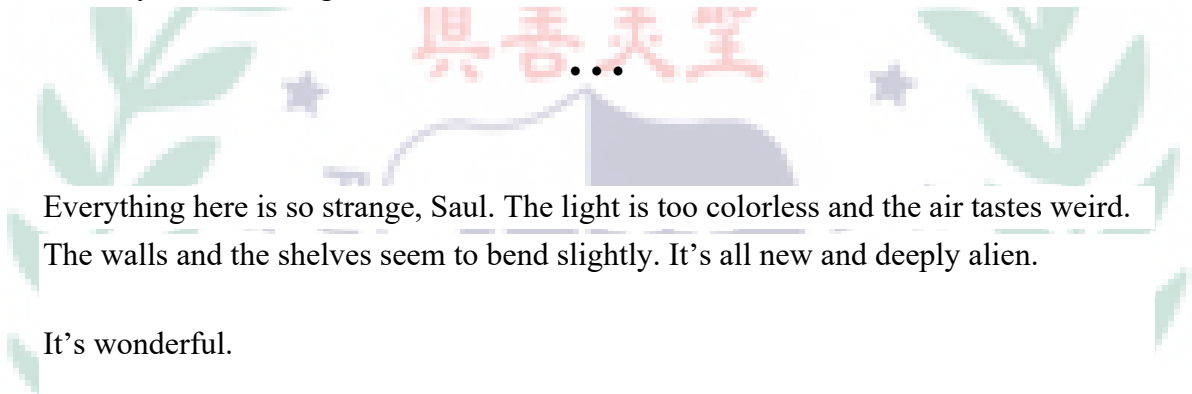
Fortunately, my interview was fairly short. The head Archivist found me worthy enough, I guess, and gave me *very, very* limited access to the Library. When they led me to the section with our solar system, I sort of wished you were here Saul, so you could have taken a picture of my expression at that moment. Pretty sure you would

qualify it as “priceless.” Because the size of this room, you could fit a small town in here.

And get this, the Archivist was *apologetic*. “We’ve only just begun to study you and we thought you would prefer to see our research in physical form,” they said, “Hopefully you can find what you need in our meager collection.”

Except, here’s the thing. They probably have more information on us than we have on ourselves.

Actually, I’m counting on it.



Everything here is so strange, Saul. The light is too colorless and the air tastes weird. The walls and the shelves seem to bend slightly. It’s all new and deeply alien.

It’s wonderful.

The Archivists have set up something that’s not too different from a studio apartment in the corner of the section on sea coral. It has running water and artificial sunlight and all eleven seasons of *M*A*S*H* on a TV that looks like it came from the 1980s. I have this theory that my living quarters are part of some junior Archivist’s final thesis project, but I’m probably just culturally projecting. On the bright side, if they picked the 80s, they could have done much worse than *M*A*S*H*.

I’m sure in a few weeks I’ll start having terrible bouts of homesickness and will send you even longer, possibly more rambling messages questioning every life decision leading up to this point. But right now, being in the Library is sort of liberating. In a let’s-call-my-big-brother-because-my-new-studio-home-is-way-too-quiet sort of way.

Oh. I got your first message today. Remember the one you recorded six months ago, about three days after I left? I knew you were pissed, but wow, Saul. A backstabbing, alien-loving, wheezing, useless coward? You had three whole days to think of something and *that’s* the best you could do?

I know you didn’t mean it. I know you’re only half angry at me, half angry at our dying planet, and half angry at, well . . .

I got a message from Huang too. She told me about the most recent miscarriage. I'm so sorry, Saul. One day the two of you are going to be the world's best parents. I believe that more than I believe in your international reforestation project, which is definitely going to work.

And I get how you think I'm abandoning you and Earth for a sterile, stable library, but I needed to come here. I have this working theory about the Librarians. Wanna hear it? Too bad, I'm going to tell you anyway.

See, the more time I spend with them, the more I'm convinced Librarians could have obliterated us if they wanted to. But they haven't. In fact, they've put a painstaking amount of effort into studying us and making first contact with all the right people. Asking those people just the right questions like: "We managed to save the information before this university archive burned or this datacenter got flooded. Would you like to retrieve it?" Questions that convinced us to put this mission together.

Which leads me to believe they're trying to help us.

I know you're rolling your eyes, Saul. Have I ever told you that you always look like a moody teenager when you do that? Yeah, I know I have. But hear me out, I'm trying to tell you something important.

Please.

Do you remember our first big argument over this mission? You said that anyone who comes to Earth while in the middle of an environmental collapse can't be trusted. I agree. Except, the first Librarian I ever met told me that the Library was built as a beacon for all sentient life in the universe. A place where researchers could come and learn about lost discoveries. And past mistakes.

I can hear you saying: "And you were naïve enough to blindly trust them, Hazel?" No, Saul, I'm not. Before I was picked for this crazy mission, I was just there to help first contact go smoothly, being one of the few remaining anthropologists who have studied interactions between vastly different cultures. I had zero interest in becoming an astronaut; space travel always seemed too risky and uncomfortable to me. But the Librarians were impressed by my commitment to cultural preservation. The space program was impressed by my ridiculously good memory. And I became convinced that if I didn't go, someone else would eventually slip and we'd be adding "total

societal collapse” along with “environmental disaster” to the list of humanity’s problems.

You see, Saul, there’s so much that I’m witnessing in the Library that I’m not telling you, because the Librarians’ advanced tech would devastate our underdeveloped society.

Which didn’t stop the people in R&D from telling me over and over again to take careful notes on everything I observe and send them the information on the down low, of course. I was sent here to reclaim any research and history that could help us save ourselves, but I think they’re hoping that I’ll learn about useful alien tech too. I’m tempted to send them a report that says: Sorry nerds, it’s all just magic.

No, Saul, not really. My official reports are going to be *way* more straightforward and professional. You know, double the facts and half the amount of sarcasm. But I think I’m going to keep sending these messages to you, for a while at least. All this is not actually why I “ran away” from home.

Really, it was just a good excuse to get out of commuting in Chicago traffic.

Just kidding. It was the Great Plains fires. There’s only so much smoke and ash an asthmatic researcher can deal with before she ships out.

Only sort of kidding.

I have a list of things I need to investigate for the scientists back home, but for now, I think I’m going to call it a day. Looking at the amazing amount of information around me makes me realize how much we’ve lost. How the Librarians managed to recover all this is a mystery I don’t intend to solve, but hopefully they managed to save the research I’m looking for.

Have I mentioned how much of this mission is chalked up to hope?



...

Hello, Saul, I’m lost. No, that’s not true, my memory won’t let me get lost, but I imagine this is what it feels like. The rows of memory tablets are identical, if you don’t pay attention to the Archivists’ annotations at every turn. I can’t actually read them because they just look like miniature sculptures, but I remember the small

differences. The Archivists were kind enough to give me a basic map with a basic translation of where to find things. But Librarians' basics and human basics are not the same thing.

God, I thought finding the research would be the easy part of this trip, but I might never find my way out of the single-celled organism section. So, give the family my love.

I know what you're thinking. Yes, I do. You're thinking: "How about you come home then, Hazel, and help me with these seedlings?" because we've been having this argument for what, ten years now?

No, not quite. Nine years, 10 months, and twenty-seven days, since that first fight over dinner.

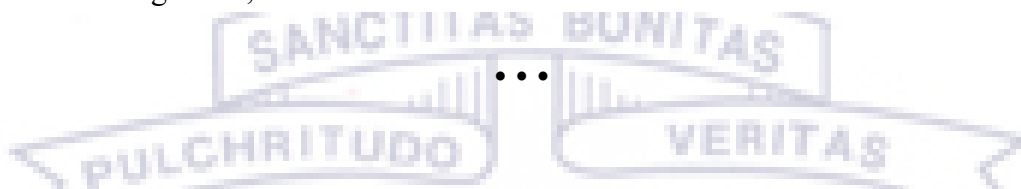
Yeah, Saul. My memory is my own worst enemy sometimes.

By the way, I got your second message today. Apology accepted. But I can't come back, Saul. I barely started my information recovery project. Some good stuff got destroyed this last decade.

Like Dr. Ryu's research. If I can find it. If it's here at all.

God, this message is depressing. Hey, here's something cool I learned today; the kitchen cabinets produce whatever food I'm thinking about and the twenty some blank books in the living room become whatever I want to read. It really is like magic. Everything a human needs and all the books a girl can want.

I'm not coming home, Saul.



Well, it's been a week and while I *still* haven't found Dr. Ryu's research, I've found plenty of other interesting things here. Like patents and working concepts of solar powered vehicles and papers on regenerating corn seed that needs two times the amount of CO₂ for photosynthesis. We had so many opportunities to stop things before they got terrible, Saul. And we missed them all.

Honestly, the wealth of information here is mind-blowing. The Librarians are like the universe's most organized hoarders. They've saved everything from road construction projects to packing and advertising protocols for the garment industry. And get this, every time I activate a memory table, the information is projected around me. Sometimes the entire aisle transforms and I literally get lost in my work. Which is why there's been a long gap since my last message. Sorry about that, Saul.

Don't laugh, but I spent all of yesterday in the children's literature section. All the stories there came to life too; old houses covered in vines and chocolate factories and little engines that could. It was fantastic, Saul. And completely depressing. Because as I sat there surrounded by those hopeful stories, it hit me that your grandchildren might not even know these stories exist. Yes, I know you disagree. But I'm a learned anthropologist and a general pessimist and I'm scared.

I asked an Archivist if this is how they store all their information. They asked if I'd be offended if they laughed and showed me the memory tablet that contained all the knowledge of the Library. It was about the size of paperback romance novel.

"Our information would be inaccessible to you otherwise," the Archivist explained. "All of your search engines are either too crude or too biased."

"But didn't this take you forever to build?"

"No," they said, but I must not have looked convinced. "Magic," they added.

Saul, I think the alien race of information scientists are listening to these recordings. So whatever you do, don't reply back with anything you don't want recorded for posterity.

"Why is the Library so large then?" I asked.

And here's where the story gets really depressing, Saul.

They told me that once this planet, the inhospitable place that's just a wasteland and a massive Library now, was full of life. There were once billions of Librarians. Now, there's only a few thousand. Before they became the masters of information science of the known universe, the Librarians ended up destroying their planet too.

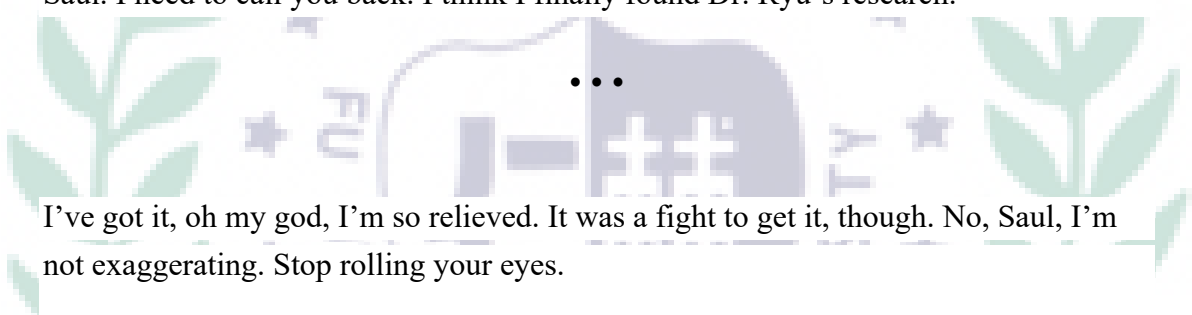
The first Librarians I ever met told me the Library is a beacon for sentient life in the galaxy, except now I know it's not just a beacon for other species. The reason why the Library's so big, Saul, is that most of the Archivists and Librarians live here too.

They couldn't save their planet either.

I can hear you asking me why I bothered coming here if I'm going to be stubbornly bleak about the future and it's not an easy thing you demanded, brother mine, and I'm trying to tell you in my circular, rambling way, that I . . .

I . . .

Saul. I need to call you back. I think I finally found Dr. Ryu's research.



I've got it, oh my god, I'm so relieved. It was a fight to get it, though. No, Saul, I'm not exaggerating. Stop rolling your eyes.

Remember when I said the Archivists could keep their information sentient? Well, she was sentient enough, Saul.

When I accessed the memory tablet, the researcher herself appeared so real and sharp I could see the gray strands in her hair and the clear gloss on her fingernails. She didn't look thrilled to see me and I should've taken it as a warning, but I was way too excited.

"Are you Dr. Yumi Ryu?" I asked. (Gushed would be more accurate.)

"Up to the age of 53," she answered

"Amazing! It's great to finally meet you, Dr. Ryu. I want to ask you everything. What's it like being archived by the Librarians? No, wait, can you tell me about your reforestation research first?"

For some reason, Saul, my rambling didn't put her at ease. "Why?" she asked, her expression suspicious.

“Um, well, because the news back home isn’t good. Most of the North Pacific rain forest has been destroyed by a combination of drought and wildfires. Including your original research at UBC.”

She didn’t seem surprised by this, just sad. “And where is your team, Ms. . . . ?”

“Hazel Smith. It’s just me.”

She frowned, the suspicion on her face growing. “They sent a single astronaut? Why?”

“Resources and funds. Both are extremely limited these days.”

“Why you then?”

“Because I’m a researcher too, Dr. Ryu, and I’m dedicated to preserving human society. Also, because I have an extraordinary memory, especially for data and details, and don’t need batteries.”

Ryu arched an eyebrow. Out of nowhere, a memory tablet about the size of a romance novel appeared in her hands. She stared it intently.

“What are you doing?” I asked, not getting a good vibe from this.

“Reading your articles, academic and otherwise. Being part of the Library, Ms., excuse me, Dr. Smith, means I can check out materials too.”

Suddenly, I knew how this conversation would go. It would be like those awful dinner parties that ended in silent awkwardness when people asked why I didn’t have kids. But there was nothing I could do, except try not to chew on my fingernails. In all of human culture, there’s nothing more uncomfortable than standing there while someone else reads your work.

But if anthropology has taught me anything, Saul, it is that human beings can always surprise you.

“Wow,” Dr. Ryu said and the tablet disappeared from her hands. “You have a depressing view on human nature.”

I've always hated having this conversation, so I stuck my hand in my pockets and said: "I'm just going off history."

She nodded. "For what it's worth, I agree."

Color me stunned, Saul. "So will you tell me about your research?"

Ryu stared at me hard, with that critical eye that only people who spend too much time in labs analyzing details can pull off.

"No," she said.

No. That's what she really said. After traveling thirty-two and a half lightyears for research like this. I won't lie, Saul, for a brief second I considered smashing the memory tablet.

"You serious?" I said.

"Yes, Dr. Smith. I've spent most of my professional career fighting politicians, big businesses, home developers, farmers. Anyone who didn't like the idea of giving up their land and returning it to forests, to try to reverse some of the damage we've done. I can't tell you how many times people tried to destroy this research."

"I'm not here to destroy anything, Dr. Ryu. I've given up too much for that."

"And what did you give up, Dr. Smith?"

"Earth. Everyone I know and love. I've risked my life for this information!" I said. In hindsight, maybe a little too defensively.

"No, that's running away," she replied. Yeah, she really said that to me, Saul. "Why are you really here?"

I sighed and used your classic line. "Because it's hope for the future that keeps us going."

"And who do you have hope for, Dr. Smith? Because from what I've read, you don't paint a hopeful picture."

I didn't know what else to do. So, I told her, Saul. Everything I've been trying to tell you.

• • •

There aren't many defining moments in my life. Mostly, I think defining moments are clichés in hindsight. So maybe this is too, but do you remember that summer, ten years ago, when everything burned? Yeah, hard to forget.

I'd just gotten my first master's degree and wildfires in northern Washington were raging, and there was a trail you could take up a mountain that was still a safe distance away, but you could witness the worst fires in history firsthand. It was only an hour drive from campus. And I was frustrated and scared, but also curious. So I figured what the hell.

I took this guy with me. No, you've never met him, Saul.

We walked up that mountain together, though the ash made for awful traction.

It wasn't love and we both knew it. That was one of the many, many rules I broke to myself that summer. But I liked him and he liked me. And in that moment, that was enough. Good enough. The world was on fire and right then, I was too grateful to have someone who would climb a mountain with me just to watch the world ending.

Mortality makes you reckless sometimes, Saul.

Eventually the smoke got so bad that my asthma couldn't take it. He practically carried me back down.

Two months later, he went back home to Colorado, where there were a few trees left and I spent that fall sobbing and wheezing. Which made sense when I took a pregnancy test.

I chose. And I don't regret that choice, Saul. Except three days, eighteen hours, and twelve minutes later, you called and told me about the first child you and Huang wouldn't have after all.

I'm sorry I didn't tell you before, Saul. But I'm not sorry either. I was twenty-three, and though I could repeat back textbooks verbatim, I consistently lost my keys and

forgot to eat. And after that summer, it was hard to see myself with a future and much less, a future for a kid. I know you're disappointed in me because you believe that no opportunity should be wasted. You think every life, even the cockroaches in the shed, should have a go at it. You've always believed in a future on Earth, Saul. Where I saw ashes, you saw fertile soil.

That's what I told Dr. Ryu. I told her all about you and Huang and your relentless perseverance and hope. I think she saw a kindred spirit in you or maybe just the right strain of stubbornness. So, she agreed to share her research with you. We're going to transcribe a little every day. Her memory tablet makes the Library's aisles transform into thriving forests. It is truly beautiful.

Consider this part one of my gift to you, Saul, because like hell am I going to apologize for the choices that brought me here.

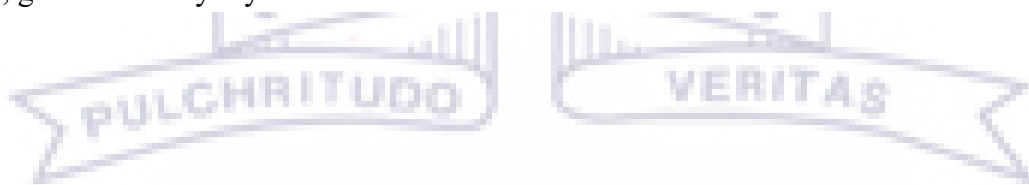
Part two is that one of the benefits of becoming the last astronaut was getting a ridiculous stipend from the government. Well, more like a life insurance payout, because I'm going to be here for a long time. Hopefully not forever, but there's a lot of lost information here and the Archivists apparently are used to long-term guests.

I told you I had one last, terrible cliché and it's the worst one of all. The one where the astronaut doesn't come home.

Saul, I want you to use that money to start that family you and Huang always wanted.

Honestly, I'm still not convinced we can save Earth, but you are, and that works for me. So, I'll keep searching and sending home the information I find and maybe, between the two of us, that'll be enough.

So, give the family my love.



Reflection

Science fiction always captivates me with its bizarre characters and imaginative worlds, gave birth by talented writers. However, what truly captures my attention are the grounded characters they create and the stories that offer a reflection on our own world, enlightening me in new ways. I believe that if I were able to skillfully translate the worlds and characters intricately crafted by the writer, I could share their stories with people around me, immersing them in a new world and inspiring them with fresh perspectives.

Before embarking on my Learning Outcome Demonstration (LOD) Project focused on translation research, I had already been captivated by science fiction stories. My interest in sci-fi was sparked by watching film adaptations of renowned early classic sci-fi tales, such as *Total Recall* and *I, Robot*, and later, modern works like *Ready Player One* and *Zima Blue*. After watching these films, I would seek out the original books written by authors like Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, and Ray Bradbury.

As I delved into my LOD Project, I discovered the Nebula Award and its category for Short Stories. Within this category, I found a wealth of brilliantly crafted short stories listed as nominees. Among them, I stumbled upon a tale penned by A. T. Greenblatt, a mechanical engineer and speculative fiction writer. The simplicity and directness of her narrative style immediately caught my attention from the very first page. *Give the Family My Love*, a one-hour read, managed to move me to tears. I was inspired and amazed by the power of words to create such exquisite characters and convey stories brimming with emotion that warmed my heart. Despite my concerns about potentially falling short in delivering a sufficiently excellent translation, I made the decision to undertake the task of translating this story. I wanted others to have the opportunity to read and experience the beauty of A. T. Greenblatt's storytelling.

When I initially took on the task of translating this 5320-word story, I discussed it with my instructor. Fortunately, the story conveniently consisted of seven sections, or, from the story's perspective, seven voice messages. We concluded that it would be manageable for me to evenly distribute the workload throughout the semester, allowing me to complete the translation in 14 weeks.

However, as I began the translation process, I quickly realized that translating a sci-fi story was more challenging than I had anticipated. The first hurdle I encountered was capturing the protagonist's speaking style. Since the story is narrated from the perspective of Hazel, the protagonist, I needed to decide on the appropriate tone of speech for the translation. With her informal and cynical demeanor, Hazel not only converses casually with her brother in the messages but also uses occasional profanity. This presented a significant challenge in determining how to approach the story. Even though I experimented with different ways to convey the same line in Chinese, but I often felt that the essence of the original text was not easily translatable. As a result, I found myself going through the same text multiple times to ensure the tone and style of the characters were accurately represented.

Another significant challenge I faced, which came as a surprise, was the difficulty I experienced in getting assistance from my instructor for the revision of various drafts. Despite making appointments in advance, it seemed that the instructor frequently forgot about our scheduled meetings, possibly due to personal matters and a busy schedule. As a result, I often found myself alone with my revision drafts, lacking the guidance and constructive criticism that an experienced translator could have provided for my translation.

Due to the lack of support from my instructor and the demanding schedule I had in my first semester as a junior, my project came to a halt, and I made little progress on the story for quite some time. It wasn't until winter vacation arrived that I

found some assistance from fellow students in the department and friends who helped me with the revision process. However, the overall translation process became increasingly challenging as I struggled to find time to seek more professional opinions. Despite these obstacles, I remained determined and persevered, eventually completing the first draft of the entire story at the beginning of the second semester of being a junior student.

After completing the translation of the story, I not only felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment but also gained valuable insights from the process. I came to understand that translation is a challenging task that cannot be easily replicated by machines. It requires a significant investment of time, perseverance, knowledge, research skills, and effective time management to translate a work efficiently and with excellence.

With the completion of *Give the Family My Love*, I see it as just the beginning of my journey in translation. It has sparked a newfound interest and passion for exploring more translation projects in the near future, whether as a hobby or potentially as a career path. I look forward to further honing my skills and gaining more experience in this field.