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Full Earth Tonight
by Laura Resnick
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Science Fiction

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TO: ELLEN PAHUTSKI
INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT
FROM: F. SCOTT NISHIDA
INTERPLANETARY TRAFFIC
DATE: 19 MARCH 2994

THE CURRENT ASSIGNMENTS DEPARTMENT REPORTS THEY HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED REQUIRED WRITTEN NOTIFICATION OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF PROMOTION TO EXTRATERRESTRIAL SERVICES DIVISION.

PLEASE PROVIDE THE ABOVE-MENTIONED SOONEST. IN TRIPLICATE. INTERPLANETARY TRAFFIC CANNOT SCHEDULE YOUR RE-LOCATION TO MOONBASE XVII UNTIL CROSS-REFERENCED DEPARTMENTS HAVE NOTIFIED SAME OF YOUR ABSENCE.

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MOONBASE XVII
7 MAY 2994

Dear Mom and Dad,

There's a full Earth in the sky tonight. It looks sort of gray from here. And it makes me homesick.

I've tried satelliting you, but Solarcom says that Planetcom has discontinued your interorbital options due to non-payment. Has Dad's auto-debit calendar malfunctioned again?

I'm adjusting comfortably to life on the moon, although the construction of Moonbase XVII-A has caused a certain amount of inconvenience here. The construction team somehow managed to disrupt the waste recycling system, so we've been rationing water. My colleagues assure me I'll eventually get used to dry-showers (yes, Mom, there really is such a thing!). Most people up here seldom bother to wash with water anymore. Frankly, I don't think I want to get used to that.

As you can imagine, I miss Roger very much. I guess I hadn't fully realized what being apart from him would be like. I'll just have to hope that we're not separated for too long.

Love, Ellen
* * * *

MOONBASE XVII-A
14 SEPTEMBER 2994

Dear Roger,

My messages are finally being forwarded to me at Base XVII-A after a long series of confusing arguments with Solarcom.

Anyhow, I know you found last weekend frustrating, with me being too

shuttle-lagged to do much besides sleep and watch old interactives. And I'm afraid my news today isn't going to make you any happier.

Extraterrestrial Services Division is sending me to Mars for several months to work with the Management Team on new training methods. This is confidential, by the way, since they won't announce expansion of the company's Martian operations until next year.

I can't get away before my trip, Roger, but you did say you had a long weekend coming up soon. Please, come to the moon. It's only half a million miles away, and there's a shuttle every Friday at noon (your time).

I'll be waiting for you.

Love, Ellen

* * * *

TO: ELLEN PAHUTSKI

MARTIAN COLONY VIII

FROM: F. SCOTT NISHIDA

INTERSTELLAR TRAFFIC

PLANETARY DATE: 17 APRIL 2995

MANY THANKS YOUR CONGRATS ON MY PROMOTION TO INTERSTELLAR. LIKEWISE YR PROMO. PLS INFORM SOONEST WRAP-UP DATE ON MARTIAN PROJECT, SO THIS DEPT CAN ARRANGE YOUR TRANSFER TO INTERSTELLAR COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK HEADQUARTERS ON POLLUX III.

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INTERSTELLAR COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK HEADQUARTERS

POLLUX III

11 NOVEMBER 2995

Dear Mom and Dad,

I think I've got your planetary date right, but I'm not positive. Everything out here is based on the new Galactic Date charts, which superceded the previous ones four solar years ago. (Don't ask me whose solar years).

I had a lot of trouble with diarrhea and nosebleeds right after the journey out here, but I'm better now. Haven't seen much of the planet yet; the company's keeping me pretty busy at the moment. I'm really sorry that I won't make it home for Christmas (again). I might as well break the news now, Dad, that I'll miss your birthday, too. But I promise I'll get back for Mom's birthday and Miriam's wedding. I miss seeing Earth, even as a pin-prick of light in the dusty Martian sky.

Oh, Roger was able to spend his vacation on Mars after all. Unfortunately, my work schedule cut into our time together, but it was wonderful to see him. By the way, he won the Jupiter Studies grant. I'm so proud of him! He should be on his way to Ganymede even as I write this. I can't wait to visit him there when my next leave comes due.

Love, Ellen

* * * *

TO: ELLEN PAHUTSKI

ICN HQ, POLLUX III

FROM: F. SCOTT NISHIDA

INTERSTELLAR TRAFFIC

GALACTIC DATE: 17.37561.1A.1675:7

SORRY TO INFORM THAT ALL LEAVE HAS BEEN INDEFINITELY POSTPONED DUE TO INTERSTELLAR TERRORISM IN THE WAKE OF RECENT BY-ELECTIONS. THIS ANSWERS, BTW, YR QUERY ABOUT MISSING STELLARCOM LINKS EXPECTED ON LAST SHIPMT TO POLLUX III: SEIZED BY LEFT-WING MILITANTS PLANNING TO USE THEM TO DISRUPT GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS. NO DAMAGE DONE THOUGH, SINCE THE D*MNED THINGS NEVER WORKED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

* * * *

ICN HQ

POLLUX III

GALACTIC DATE: 17.35450.2B.1843:7

Dear Roger,

I think it's mid-June on Earth (although even the computer doesn't seem

too sure), but I have no idea what the date around Jupiter is. Anyhow, regardless of the date, I miss you. I've been so depressed since your last letter telling me that funding has been cut to the point where you can't afford a trip to Earth, much less Pollux III. If only my scheduled leave hadn't been cancelled after the by-elections!

As for coming to Ganymede, I just don't see how I can. My sister scheduled her wedding to coincide with my mother's birthday just so I could be there for both occasions. I can't disappoint them.

My department's consolidation with Intercultural Training Operations has begun, and the pressure is enormous. I can't add extra time onto my leave to come to Ganymede.

Look, Roger, I make decent money. Why don't I simply pay for your ticket to Earth? Please, at least consider the idea. Nishida, the company's traffic director, says that an Earthbound spaceship leaves Ganymede every ten solar days, and I can get good rates by going through him.

Please, darling, meet me on Earth.

Love, Ellen

* * * *

ICN (TEMPORARY) HQ

GANDAR VII

G.D.: 17.34349.1B.1847:6

Dear Mom and Dad,

Sorry I've been out of touch since returning to Pollux and relocating to our temporary headquarters on Gandar. Work has kept me incredibly busy, though the good news is that I'm in line for a promotion.

Miriam's husband is being transferred already? That was quick. Well, tell her not to worry. The hospital facilities are excellent on Antares V and delivering the baby should be a breeze there. Will you visit them there or wait for her to bring the baby planetside next Xmas?

Yes, as you guessed, there was some tension between Roger and myself during my visit home. Miriam's wedding reminded us of how far we still are from being able to set a date for our own, and neither of us was feeling very well. Hyperspace makes me prone to headaches, nosebleeds, and bad temper for days, and Roger wasn't well either. I've just received a transmission from him explaining why. It turns out that, unbeknownst to him, he was in the early stages of Ganymede Fever. Don't worry, he's getting excellent care and is already feeling better. If only we weren't so many light-years apart!

Love, Ellen

* * * *

TO: F. SCOTT NISHIDA

INTERSTELLAR OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

CASTOR VI

FROM: ELLEN PAHUTSKI, DIRECTOR

INTERSTELLAR COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK/INTERCULTURAL

TRAINING OPERATIONS

(TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS) GANDAR VII

G.D.: 17.34349.3C.1951:7

THANKS YR CONGRATS ON MY PROMOTION. LIKEWISE! HOW IS LIFE ON CASTOR VI? ALSO THANKS YR CONCERN ON MY RECENT TROUBLES. I'M SURE THINGS WILL WORK OUT IN THE END.

PLS: HELP! MUST BE ASSIGNED A FIRST-CONTACT SPECIALIST (URGENT), AN ACCOUNTS MANAGER, AND TWO CLASS G TRANSPORTS WITH FUEL CONVERSION CAPABILITY.

BTW, ARE THINGS BETTER AT HOME NOW? I'M SURE IT WILL WORK OUT.

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TO: ELLEN PAHUTSKI, DIR

ICN/ITO (TEMP) HQ, GANDAR VII

FR: F. SCOTT NISHIDA

IOM, CASTOR VI

GD: 17.34349.4D.1967:12

ACCOUNTS MANAGER ARRIVING ON NEXT SHUTTLE FROM SIRIUS SYSTEM. AND

THREE CLASS G TRANSPORTS ON THEIR WAY, BUT ONLY TWO WITH FUEL CONVERSION CAP. STILL SEARCHING FOR A FIRST-CONTACT SPECIALIST. HOW URGENT IS URGENT? THINGS BETTER AT HOME, THOUGH MY WIFE IS NOT HAPPY WITH FACILITIES ON CASTOR AND MAY GO BACK TO EARTH FOR HER INTERNSHIP.
HAS YOUR FIANCE RECOVERED FROM GANYMEDE FEVER YET?

* * * *

TO: F. SCOTT NISHIDA
IOM, CASTOR VI
FR: E. PAHUTSKI, DIR
ICN/ITO (TEMP) HQ, GANDAR VII
GD: 17.33238.5E.1981.8

URGENT = I CAN'T IMPLEMENT PLANNED EXPANSIONS, DUE TO BEGIN IN FIFTEEN GALACTIC DAYS, WITHOUT FIRST-CONTACT OFFICER. MY NEW ACCOUNTS MANAGER, BTW, ADVISES THAT POSTPONEMENT WILL MEAN WITHDRAWAL OF PRINCIPLE CAPITAL FROM MINING COLONIES IN THE RIGEL SYSTEM IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN THIS DEPT MEANWHILE. WHERE IS FIRST-CONTACT SPECIALIST PROMISED BY PERSONNEL DEPT MORE THAN SIX STANDARD MONTHS AGO?

ROGER RECOVERED FROM GANYMEDE FEVER -- AND PROMPTLY FELL IN LOVE WITH HIS MEDIC. HE FINALLY ADMITTED IT TO ME WHEN SHE DESERTED HIM FOR A POST ON DELUROS VII (WHY DOES EVERYONE WANT TO GO TO DELUROS THESE DAYS?). WE ARE TRYING TO WORK THINGS OUT NOW.

CAN'T YR WIFE GET AN INTERNSHIP SOME PLACE CLOSER THAN EARTH?

* * * *

ICN/ITO HQ
ALTAIR IV
GD: 17.31016.3V.2074.3

Dear Roger,

Your transmission has finally been forwarded to my division's new HQ on Altair IV. I was devastated upon reading it, but I have come to realize it's for the best. I should have realized on Mars that we were growing apart, but I wanted to blame our problems on the hectic pace of those crazy Martian days.

I wish only happiness for you. Good luck in your new life with your new wife.

As ever, Ellen

* * * *

TO: ELLEN PAHUTSKI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ICN/ITO HQ, ALTAIR IV
FR: F. SCOTT NISHIDA, DIRECTOR
IOM, CASTOR VI
GD: 17.30905.4A.2101.9

MARRIED? THE SKUNK! AND NOT EVEN TO THE MEDIC HE WAS CHEATING ON YOU WITH! ELLEN, TRUST ME, YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITHOUT HIM.

RE: INSTALLMENT OF DRY-SHOWERS IN YR NEW HQ ON ALTAIR. IT'LL TAKE TIME; THE CURRENT MODELS ARE ALL IN VIOLATION OF ALTAIR'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES.

MY WIFE HAS FILED FOR DIVORCE WITHOUT RETURNING TO CASTOR. SHE GETS THE HOUSE AND OTHER POSSESSIONS WE LEFT ON EARTH. I GET OUR FURNITURE AND THINGS ON CASTOR, WHICH I'LL TAKE WITH ME WHEN THIS DEPT IS TRANSFERRED TO ALTAIR IV NEXT GALACTIC QUARTER.

OH, THANKS YR CONGRATS ON MY PROMOTION. LIKEWISE!
TAKE CARE, SCOTT

* * * *

TO: F. SCOTT NISHIDA, DIR
IOM, CASTOR VI
FR: E. PAHUTSKI, EXEC. DIR.
ICN/ITO HQ, ALTAIR IV
GD: 17.38773.8L.2149.3

HOW MUCH LONGER ON THOSE ENVIRON-FRIENDLY DRY-SHOWERS? I'D FORGOTTEN HOW MESSY WASHING WITH WATER IS.

LOOK, SCOTT, SINCE YR COMPANY QUARTERS WON'T BE READY IN TIME FOR YR

ARRIVAL ON ALTAIR IV (SURPRISE, SURPRISE) WHY NOT JUST STAY WITH ME UNTIL YOU CAN MOVE INTO YR APARTMENT? I HAVE PLENTY OF ROOM, AND IT'S NO TROUBLE AT ALL.

OH, THERE'S ALSO A PLANET-WIDE TRANSPORT STRIKE, SO I'LL SEND THIS DEPT'S EXTRA CLASS G TRANSPORT -- GRIN -- TO MEET YOUR STARSHIP.

TAKE CARE, ELLEN

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HOUSING BLOCK H-171G

APARTMENT NO. 3418-4

ALTAIR IV

GD: 17.35341.3A.2201.7

Dear Mom and Dad,

I tried satelliting, but Interstellarcom still hasn't repaired links destroyed during the last meteor shower here. I wanted to let you know before you complete your travel plans that Scott and I will have to postpone our wedding.

My department is being transferred to Deluros VII. This could put a strain on my relationship with Scott, I realize, but we're hoping that his division will be transferred to Deluros, too, within the next two standard years.

Anyhow, with all the extra work and confusion this transfer is creating, I can't plan a wedding right now. Since we've had to cancel our original plans for the wedding, we discussed your suggestion again, but we've definitely decided against going all the way back to Earth to get married. None of our colleagues could get enough time off to attend the wedding there. Anyhow, except for family, neither of us really knows anyone on Earth anymore.

Scott knows astronomy much better than I do, and at night he shows me which star is yours. It seems so faint and far away, but I wish on it all the same.

Love, Ellen

-- The End --

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