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# Rommel ruft Kairo

By John Eppler

Change course, Direction, 120 degrees

Roger, hard to port

Hard to port

- I need navigational information

- OK

It all began one day,

without warning,

like this...

Still no answer at Taguchi's?

No

It's been a week,

he must have his reasons

It shouldn't take a whole week

to work on that disk

No...

Something's wrong

Maybe I should see if he's OK

I just got the creeps

What?

I don't know,

I just feel like something's wrong

Like something's horribly wrong

What's up with Taguchi?

I don't know

If we don't get that disk now,

we're in real trouble

The deadline's tomorrow

I know that

What am I supposed to do?

We haven't heard a thing

I think I'd better go see how he's doing

Taguchi?

**KAIRO:**

Hey, you are here

Hey, Michi...

I was worried about you,

you haven't called

Right, sorry

Did you finish working on that disk?

Yeah, it's somewhere in that pile

You OK? Are you sick?

No...

What have you been up to,

all on your lonesome? We're friends  
Yeah...Stuff...  
Help yourself to the disk  
You ought to label your disks  
This is it?  
The one marked Work File?  
Taguchi?  
Michi  
Oh, Junco  
You OK? Was it awful?  
I'm fine  
I'd say it's break time  
Oh, I forgot, here  
Thanks  
It's so upsetting  
I don't know what he was  
so depressed about  
He never said anything,  
so what could we have done?  
Maybe,  
he suddenly just wanted to die  
I get that way sometimes  
It's so easy to hang yourself  
Hey! Why so gloomy?  
Oh, sorry  
About Taguchi?  
It's just...If only I'd...  
He seemed like the Taguchi I know  
I never imagined he'd  
do something like that  
Time to put it behind us  
Besides, it wasn't your fault  
Yeah...  
Say...Would you take a look?  
At what?  
Taguchi's disk  
What is it?  
It's Taguchi's place  
Is that Taguchi?  
Yeah, I think so  
Look  
What's going on?  
Isn't that the same scene?  
I can't tell

Hey, look  
That's a face...  
A reflection  
You're right  
Can you blow it up?  
Let me see...  
That was Taguchi, wasn't it?  
Sure seems like it  
What's going on?  
Maybe something strange is going on  
Strange?  
I don't know  
I don't even care anymore  
Something's definitely not right  
A message in a bottle  
launched 10 years ago  
by a boy on Tanegashima Island,  
was recently discovered  
on a beach in Malaysia  
some 4,000km away  
Hikono Koichi was  
a 4th grader  
when he sent off his message  
Members of a local group,  
cleaning up the beach,  
a sea turtle habitat,  
discovered the bottle by accident  
I never imagined it would find its  
way to some foreign country  
I was shocked to get  
an answer after 10 years  
The group located Hikono  
through his former elementary school  
Next, the National Weather Service  
forecasts another unseasonably  
hot summer, it's the 3rd  
for eastern Japan...  
for western Japan...  
Northern Japan...will...  
'Welcome to the Internet'  
No, this way. Here, OK  
Next, OK  
'Have Fun'...OK, I'll have fun  
Done 'OK'

What's this crap?  
Yes, I agree  
Next...  
What? I guess that's OK  
Next again, huh  
What?  
What the...Oh well...  
What the hell...  
Hey...this...  
Who's...what's...  
Would you like to meet a ghost?  
Stupid crap!  
What the...  
Maybe you should change  
the size on this batch file  
Using the variable?  
Yeah  
So you'll find its property, right?  
On, conventional memory  
Right  
See  
So that's how you do it  
Say...  
Can the internet dial you up itself?  
You in computer science?  
No, economics, no relation  
Huh...Sounds like a hacker  
A hacker...  
Huh...  
It said  
' 'Do you want to meet a ghost? '  
Some website like that  
A ghost, huh...  
Which website was that?  
What?  
Something about meeting ghosts?  
I don't really know  
It just appeared last night  
Know the address?  
What? Um...address?  
I see...  
Windows?  
Yeah  
Open the Explorer log...

Oh, no, no, I really don't  
know anything about computers  
The next time the site shows up,  
click on it to bookmark it  
Not so fast  
Click...  
Can you repeat that?  
Click on it  
Click on it to bookmark it  
If that doesn't work,  
You know the print screen key?  
Yeah, this one?  
Try pressing it  
If it doesn't work...  
Print screen key  
Got it  
Let me know?  
Sure  
See you  
Don't bother with that Mom  
What? Sure  
Are you eating this junk again?  
It's not good for you  
I'm going now  
Have you called your father?  
Nope  
I see...  
but what if you get in trouble?  
I can't rush over  
It's awkward for me to see him,  
but you should  
Forget it. He's out of the picture  
He lives here in Tokyo  
But Tokyo's huge  
I know, but...  
I'm fine. I've got my friends  
You sure?  
I guess you'll be alright then  
You're so trusting and  
get carried away...  
Hello  
Hello  
Help...  
Help...

Help...  
Who's this?  
Help...  
What is this...  
The Forbidden Room  
Taguchi?  
What happened, Taguchi...?  
What?  
What am I saying?  
What happened to Yabe?  
Try his house  
No answer  
Huh...  
I hope nothing's wrong  
Oh no, what's he up to?  
I've got to go see him  
No! Don't go!  
He'll turn up He'll come if we wait!  
Nothing strange has happened yet  
Yeah...  
Let's just act normal  
Yeah, at least for today  
Sorry, I'm late  
Sure, sure  
Where were you? Why didn't you call?  
Hey!  
Can you believe? He's ignoring us!  
What's going on?  
Who cares...  
What do I do now?  
Click it  
And bookmark it  
Doesn't work  
If that doesn't work,  
press the print screen key  
There  
Hi  
You're the one...  
Um...  
Kawashima  
Kawashima  
Yeah, Kawashima  
I'm Karasawa Harue  
Harue san, Harue san

How'd it go?  
Well, it came back again  
Really?  
Yeah  
And,  
I pressed that print screen key...  
Right  
Can I come over and check it out?  
Yeah, sure, absolutely fine  
I just need a minute  
Um...  
What's this?  
That? Something we programmed here  
If two dots get too close, they die,  
but if they get too far apart,  
they're drawn closer  
Huh...what's it for?  
A miniature model of our world...  
But only the grad student  
who designed it understands it  
I wouldn't...  
Suggest staring at it too long  
Sorry, it's a mess  
Thank you  
There you go  
- Have a drink  
- Thank you  
Getting the data?  
Yeah, almost set  
What got you started on the internet?  
Nothing in particular...  
You don't like computers, right?  
No  
Wanted to connect with other people?  
Maybe...I don't really know  
Everybody else is into it  
People don't really connect, you know  
What?  
Like those dots simulating humans  
We all live totally separately  
That's how it seems to me  
Oh...Huh...  
I wonder...  
Yabe...



Kudo san  
Yes  
Can you move these orchids  
into the greenhouse?  
Yes  
Um, boss...  
Yes?  
Isn't Yabe acting strange?  
You think so?  
Can I go check on him?  
Fine, but...  
It might be a waste of time  
Words said in friendship with  
the best of intentions  
always winding up hurting  
your friends deeply  
And then you wind up getting hurt  
Is friendship always that way?  
If that's so, what's left?  
If I were you...  
Who needs friends like that?  
A courageous choice in itself  
Are you OK?  
Did something happen?  
If something happened,  
let's talk about it  
Both Junco and I,  
are really worried  
I saw...  
A face...  
What?  
A horrible face...  
I've never seen anything like it...  
What are you saying?  
What did you see?  
The Forbidden Room  
Forbidden Room? What's that?  
Is that...  
The room with the red tape?  
Don't dare go in there!  
Please,  
tell me  
What happened?  
I'm cold

Yabe...  
Are you OK?  
'Exit'  
Harue  
Hi  
I don't really use the library much  
Couldn't find the way out  
Phantoms  
You're reading this?  
Yeah  
Is it related  
to your work in the lab?  
Yeah  
Huh...  
Do you have a minute?  
What? Sure  
Come  
Isn't it strange?  
Yeah...sort of...  
Almost like ghosts, right?  
You're right, they're like ghosts  
Sometimes, these turn up  
At first,  
they look like the other dots  
What are they?  
I don't know  
A bug?  
No  
That website...  
What?  
Oh, what happened with that?  
Nothing...yet...  
Huh...  
But I think they're related...  
I'm sure they're related  
You think?  
Let me know if anything happens  
Yeah, sure  
Karasawa san  
I need you to check this  
Yes  
And you are?  
My friend, Kawashima  
Huh...

The grad student, Yoshizaki san  
Hello  
I forgot to give you my number  
Oh, right  
Call me, OK?  
Right  
Anytime, OK?  
Yeah  
Thank you  
' 'Everyone dies, therefore there's no  
logical reason for ghosts not to exist  
' 'How many ghosts have...  
existed since prehistoric times?''  
Do you see it too?  
Sure you do,  
because it's really there  
Who is that?  
You'll have to catch him to find out  
Start right now,  
and you might succeed  
Have a go?  
What?  
Why don't you, right now?  
He disappeared  
I see  
He must be a student...  
I don't know him  
Maybe you're right.  
Sorry I encouraged you  
See you  
Wait a minute  
Just what was that?  
I'm cold...  
The spirit...  
Or consciousness, the soul,  
whatever you want to call it,  
it turns out the realm they  
inhabit has a finite capacity  
Whether that capacity  
accommodates billions or trillions,  
eventually, it will run out of space  
Once it's filled to the brim,  
it's got to overflow  
somehow, somewhere

But where?  
The souls have no choice  
but to ooze into another realm,  
that is to say, our world  
Maybe, at first...  
it started with  
something really simple  
Once that realm  
reached critical mass,  
any device would have sufficed  
Thrown it together with  
the means and materials at hand  
That's how I see it  
Excuse me, do you have any tape?  
Anything'll do, some tape  
How's this?  
Thank you  
After many hours or days,  
or many weeks, it finally happens  
Through that process,  
it spreads around the world  
But now they're no longer  
the faint presence they began as  
You saw one yourself  
I don't believe your stories  
Right, sorry, it's all hypothetical  
Thanks for the tea  
Are you OK?  
Just fine  
But if this really happened,  
there's no turning back  
No matter how simple the device,  
once the system's complete,  
it'll function on its own,  
and become permanent  
In other words,  
the passage is now open...  
that's how it looks  
Hello  
Oh, I see, our boss isn't there?  
Yes, I understand  
If he does stop by,  
Will you please ask him to call us?  
Yes, thank you very much

Michi,  
what do you think is going on?  
Why's everyone disappearing?  
Oh, hello, this is  
Sunny Plant Sales calling  
Thank you for your business  
Is our boss there  
with you by any chance?  
Oh, I see...Thank you, and excuse me  
I'll go look for him  
Wait, Junco, wait  
Yes, hello...  
Boss?  
Help  
Yabe!  
Are you Yabe?  
Yabe!  
Help me...  
Help me...  
Help...  
Help...  
Junco...  
Junco!  
Junco, no!  
Junco!  
Are you OK?  
Are you OK?  
Help me...  
Help me...  
Help me...  
Junco!  
Look, I'm right here  
I'm right here, it's OK  
Excuse me  
Karasawa Harue tel: 090-4079-2677  
What are you doing, Harue?  
You're dripping wet!  
They went away...  
They've all disappeared...  
They always do...  
I have to run away...  
Run away somewhere...  
Harue! Hey, Harue!  
Listen, Harue! Harue!

Calm down! Harue!  
Thank you...  
I always wondered  
what it's like to die...  
From when I was really little...  
I was always alone  
Any parents or family?  
Sure, but they're irrelevant  
Right...  
That after death,  
you live happily with  
everyone over there  
Can we stop talking about this?  
But it may be true  
Sure, but...  
Then in high school it dawned on me  
you might be all alone  
after death, too  
There's no way to know  
How could you?  
The idea was so terrifying  
I couldn't even bear it  
That nothing changes with death,  
just right now, forever  
Is that what becoming  
a ghost is about?  
You can't mess with that  
It's really bad  
What have ghosts got to do with us?  
Besides, we're alive  
Then, who are they?  
Are they really alive?  
How are they different from ghosts?  
In fact,  
ghosts and people are the same,  
whether they're dead or alive  
It's not right. It's wrong  
They're all crazy  
Nobody knows  
what happens when you die  
All this about ghosts, but I won't  
believe in them, even if I see one  
But I do know  
that I'm definitely alive

and so are you, Harue  
That's for sure, right?  
So I don't want to think about  
the fact we'll die someday  
Just maybe...  
In 10 years, or at least  
while we're still alive,  
they'll invent a drug  
that prevents death  
Then, we could live forever and ever  
Of course you might think  
I'm crazy to say that, but...  
I'd rather bet on that  
You want to live forever?  
Yeah  
That sounds like fun?  
Yeah...That's what I think  
Huh...Maybe I've got it all wrong  
No...  
It'll turn out just like you say  
I'm sure  
What?  
Ghosts won't kill people  
Because that would just  
make more ghosts  
Isn't that right?  
Instead, they'll try  
to make people immortal  
By quietly...  
trapping them in their own loneliness  
Help...  
Help...  
Junco, It'll be OK  
It'll be OK  
OK...  
I fell asleep...  
How do you feel?  
Yeah  
Something to drink?  
How about some coffee?  
Michi...  
What?  
Am I just going to die like this?  
Of course not

That's right...  
I'll just keep on living,  
all alone...  
What?  
No  
Junco!  
Junco!  
Junco!  
Junco!  
Why! Why!  
Junco, don't go!  
Junco!  
Mother?  
Mother?  
Mother!  
I'll be right there  
Harue...  
Harue! Hey...  
Kawashima...take me with you  
I'm scared to be alone  
Take me somewhere  
OK, sure  
Where to?  
Somewhere far away  
Out of Order  
Shit, let's just go!  
There's no one...  
No...  
Where did everyone go?  
I'm here  
I'm here beside you  
Even if,  
there's no one else, it doesn't matter  
We are both definitely here  
Guess that's true...  
What happened?  
I've got to go back!  
What? No! We've come this far!  
But this is the end of the line  
That's not true. It'll start moving  
I'll go check with the driver.  
Come with me  
OK, but promise you'll  
wait right here



I'll be right back. Promise  
Harue!  
The Forbidden Room  
Construction Materials - red tape  
I'm...  
Not alone...  
Harue,  
it's me, Kawashima  
Harue! Listen!  
Listen, what do you say to this?  
The two of us live together  
That way, we can always be together  
If we keep living alone,  
we'll just get worse and worse  
because we're weak  
We'll balance each other out  
How about living that way?  
Would you try it with me?  
What do you think, Harue?!  
Harue!  
Harue!  
Harue!

**Tokyo:**

Sakai Mitsuo, age 35

**Tokyo:**

Yamazaki Naoko, age 6

**Kanagawa:**

Hirayama Michio, age 80

**Kanagawa:**

Kawahara Takumi, age 25

**Saitama:**

Tomioka Shigeki, age 8

**Tokyo:**

Yoshida Tomoko, age 21

**Tokyo:**

Nakajima Kumi, age 5

**Kanagawa:**

Kitaoka Eri, age 3

**Tokyo:**

Fukuda Tatsuya, age 57

Um...are you OK?

Breakdown?

Yeah

Want some?

You are?

Oh, me? Um...

What are you doing here?

What am I doing here...?

You?

So neither your dad nor your mom  
made it through...

No...

So many things happened at once,  
it's impossible to sort them all out

Yeah

Me too. My head's all messed up

So you're a student, Kawashima?

Yeah

Lucky you

I don't think so

Here

Oh, thanks...

And you?

I had a job

Wow, amazing

Nothing amazing

Did you have any friends?

Friends?

Maybe one, I guess

What was she like?

What? I don't really know...

I never really found out...

Where is she?

Somewhere...

OK, try starting it

OK, good

Why don't you look for her?

What?

She's still somewhere, right?

You've got to help her then  
But...  
Let's go find her. I'll help you  
This is the last stop...  
After that we go as far as we can  
I can sort of see...  
The future...  
' 'Help' '  
Look over there  
An abandoned factory?  
I wonder...  
Shall we try it?  
Listen, even if you see  
a door sealed with red tape,  
don't go near it, OK?  
I know  
You OK?  
Look...at this  
Look...over there  
Kawashima  
Harue!  
Watch out!  
What happened, Harue!  
What are you doing with that?  
Let's get out of this place together  
Together?  
Yeah  
C'mon, hand it over  
Harue! Harue!  
Oh, no, a hospital...  
Harue! Don't die!  
C'mon! Please!  
Help me!  
Harue!  
We couldn't save her...  
No...  
We're out of gas...  
I'll get some,  
there was gas back there  
You'll be OK?  
Wait for me. I'll be OK  
Forever...  
death was...  
eternal Ioneliness...

Help...  
Don't ask me!  
What's that got to do with me!  
Forever...  
death was...  
eternal loneliness...  
You're not real  
I refuse to acknowledge...Never...  
I refuse to acknowledge death!  
I know  
I'll catch you  
Then you'll disappear  
That's it, right? Right?  
You can't beat me!  
I am...  
real...  
Kawashima!  
What is it?  
Forget it...Let's go...  
It's too much...  
What...are you doing?  
You went in there...  
Me?  
Yeah, I did, but I'm fine  
Don't cry  
You want to go back?  
To what's left of Harue?  
That makes you feel better?  
If that's what you want,  
I'll go with you  
No...  
Let's go...  
As far as we can go  
Are you sure about that?  
Yeah  
Can you get out?  
You OK?  
Be careful  
Wait here, OK?  
Death comes to us all...  
If so, maybe we would  
have been happier,  
had we gone with the rest  
But we chose to keep going

into the future...  
We'll head for Latin America  
We're still getting signals there  
Though they're pretty weak  
We've got to give it a try,  
no matter what we find  
If anyone's survived,  
we can head out again  
and go...  
as far as we can  
C'mon, be strong  
Have I done the right thing?  
Yes  
Are you sure?  
Yes  
You're doing the right thing  
Now, alone with  
my last friend in the world,  
I have found happiness