

DATE: Unknown

TIME: Unknown

LOCATION: Between-space Layer 2

I took some time today to self-indulge a little. Diverted some of the TVO data into sending something to Layer 3 instead. Felt like there was something I needed to get off my chest and put behind me.

I needed to talk to my dad, one last time, even if it was as difficult as it was, both mentally, and literally, to reach him.

First, I needed a contact in the third dimension. I had never set up anything like that, but luckily, it was somehow easier than contacting Layer 4, because I actually knew people in Layer 3. I managed to send a message to an old friend of mine, Mitsuko.

From: (unknown sender)

Hey, Mitsy.

Sorry it's been so long. I guess you thought I was dead. I know how they've labelled it in the news up there. "Freak accident kills scientist's daughter".

I'm... alive. Technically. It's hard to explain, and I don't think you'd believe me if I did. But I need your help with something.

I've attached some files to this email. You can use those to verify that it's really me. I'm sorry to spring this on you.

I need you to act as a messenger between me and my dad.

Mitsuko replied pretty quickly, and, predictably, was confused, shocked, and concerned. But if there was one thing she was always good at, it was understanding quickly, no matter the situation.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

I can't believe it.

I knew those stories about your dad's experiment killing you were made up. Didn't believe it for a goddamn second. Are you sure you don't need me to come get you? I don't care where it is, I'll come find you if you need me to.

From: (unknown sender)

Sorry... it's... not a place that you can reach. Even sending this limited message is taking a lot of time and energy that I don't have to waste... I'm okay, though, I promise. I'll be okay. And once I'm out of this mess, I promise I'll come back and tell you everything. Okay? It's a Saturday Promise.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

It really is you... fuck.

I understand. I'll trust you.

Your dad is in the high-security prison in Tokyo. I can go there and relay messages to you through email, but that's the best I can do. I'm sorry. Getting visiting hours there is already really tough.

From: (unknown sender)

Thank you. That's more than good enough.

I waited a bit. Took a while for her to get back to me. Did she move out of Tokyo? I guess it would make sense, before all of this began, she was getting ready to move into her university life, and she was studying closer to Kyoto.

I thought about my dad. He was still alive. I figured he would be, but hearing it confirmed myself made me feel... something. I don't know what I was feeling. I didn't know what I would say to him. But I needed to talk to him. Just once.

A full five hours later, Mitsy responded to me.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

Hey. I'm here. He's right beside me. I'll relay back to you the things he says, and show him the things you say. Okay?

Shit. This was really happening. I guess I should have expected I'd be this nervous.

From: (unknown sender)

Uh... hey.

I couldn't get anything else out at first.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

He says "hello".

Figures. Neither of us were ever good at talking to each other when it came to addressing serious matters. It was oddly refreshing in a way. He was still my dad. As I started to type again, another email came through.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

He says "I'm sorry".

I grit my teeth a little.

From: (unknown sender)

You're sorry? That's the first thing you want to say? Not that you're happy I'm still alive? That you're worried about me? You're thinking about yourself and your apology first???

I shouldn't be angry. I shouldn't be. Calm down, Saturday.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

He says "I know. You're right. I just don't know what to say. There's too many things that need to be said, and I can't get the words out".

My anger turned into a sudden overflowing waterfall of emotion, and I felt myself tear up.

Of course he was struggling. He was still human. He still put his daughter into this situation. I took some deep breaths to calm down my anger. I didn't do all this just to yell at him.

From: (unknown sender)

Did you... know that I'm still alive?

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"I did. I was keeping a constant look in on what was going on in there from the moment everything went wrong until they took me in. Since then, you've been in the custody of the military, and I've been getting daily reports from them."

So, he's been watching everything? It makes sense. On one hand, I kinda hate that I've been being watched this entire time, but on the other hand, the exact same thing is happening with Layer 4, so I can't really complain. Besides, it's not like he can do much.

From: (unknown sender)

Why didn't you pull me out immediately? Or were you not able to?

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"We tried. God, we tried. But there was no way we could. Shutting down the Duskbreaker without the authorization of 1028 would kill you. I... I couldn't do it."

From: (unknown sender)

...I figured. I just... needed to ask.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"Saturday, can I ask you something?"

From: (unknown sender)

I came here to talk to you one last time, so yes. Ask away.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"Do you... hate me?"

I thought about it. Did I hate him? I don't think so.
But I could never forgive him.

From: (unknown sender)

Hate? No, Setsuki, I don't hate you. But I can never forgive you. Your intentions were misguided, but came from the heart. You started the Sunrise Foundation because you wanted to help me, however twisted your idea of "helping me" may have been. You are not a bad person. But the effects of what you did to me will never go away. I will persist, and live on in spite of them, but they will be a part of me forever, and to that end, I cannot ever see you in my future.

I do not hate you. But I will never forgive you. You are a part of my yesterday, one I will always remember, but you will not be a part of my tomorrow.

There was a while before the next message came through. I braced myself, expecting an angry response. That's what I always got from him.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"Good."

I was caught off guard. Good? What did he mean by that???

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

He's... he's crying. But he's smiling. I'm not looking at the messages you're sending, what did you say??? Actually, scratch that, that's not my business to know.

Goddammit, Dad... fuck... you always make this so much more complicated than it needs to be...!

I was crying. Tears streamed down my face, the only organic matter in a space devoid of nature, synthesized from thought and pain.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"Please don't forgive me. But don't forget me either. I'm... satisfied."

What was he thinking...? I didn't know. I couldn't know. We were different people. I couldn't tell what was going on in his mind just by reading it like I could with the people in Layers 1 and 0.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

*"But no matter what happens, I want you to remember this.
No matter what happens, what I am to you, where I am in your life,*

I am forever proud of my daughter."

I fell to the floor, burying my head in the side of my bed, sobbing. I cried for minutes on end, releasing years of pent-up emotion.

You... are a crazy... stupid old man...

Minutes later, I pulled myself back up to my desk and typed a final message. Right before sending it, I hesitated... and changed the last word.

From: (unknown sender)

Thank you for everything.

Goodbye, Dad.

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

"Goodbye, Saturday." That was the last thing he said.

From: (unknown sender)

Thank you so much, Mitsy. I... need to go now. But I promise I'll be back. And we'll have so much to catch up on when I do. Alright...?

From: Mitsuko Chirikawa

I'll hold you to that, so you'd better not pussy out, okay?

I laughed. It was the same ol' Mitsuko.

From: (unknown sender)

Promise. See you soon!

Yeah.

I'll see you soon.