Record of a Spaceborn Few: translation and stylistic analysis of a passage of Becky Chambers’s novel

Record of a Spaceborn Few: překlad a stylistická analýza vybraných pasáží románu spisovatelky Becky Chambersové

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis, titled “Record of a Spaceborn Few: The translation and stylistic analysis of Becky Chambers’s novel” is the result of my own work and that I used only the cited sources.

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Abstract

This BA thesis is focused on the translation of selected parts of a novel by B. Chambers and their stylistic analysis. The thesis consists of a practical and a theoretical part. The outcome of the practical part is a side-by-side translation. The theoretical part analyses differences between Czech and focuses mainly on the lexical aspect.

Key words

Translation, Chambers, lexical aspect, science fiction, word formation.

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá překladem vybraných částí románu B. Chambersové a jejich stylistickou analýzu. Práce se skládá z praktické a teoretické části. Výstupem praktické části je zrcadlový překlad, teoretická část se zabývá rozdíly mezi češtinou a angličtinou se zaměřením na lexikální aspekt.

Klíčová slova

Překlad, Chambersová, lexikální aspekt, sci-fi, slovotvorba
# Obsah

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1 Introduction

There were numerous reasons which led me to choosing this particular novel as the topic of my bachelors thesis. The choice was very limited, as I had to choose only from the books which had not been translated into Czech, which ruled out most of my favourite books or books which I found attractive from the translator’s point of view.

From the very beginning I was certain that the work I would translate would be a science fiction novel. This has been my favourite literary field since childhood and in the list of all the books I have ever read it prevails over any other genre. That not only made the writing of this thesis more entertaining for me, but it also made it easier, as I am comfortable with the style.

Yet another criterion which I considered when opting for this particular novel was its usage of neologisms. I decided to focus primarily on the lexical and morphological aspects of the novel, since its charm dwells in the fictive futuristic lexis Chambers created solely for the purposes of the trilogy. For those reasons significantly downplay syntactical aspects and other general linguistic properties of the text, as those can be found in any other work and have been documented and described many times. In the analysis I will be addressing the processes of word formation of the neologisms and the aim of certain lexical and morphological phenomena in the futuristic context of the novel.
Becky Chambers was born in 1985 and grew up in Southern California, until she moved to San Francisco to study at the University of San Francisco. After graduating she worked as a freelance writer. In 2014 she raised enough money on Kickstarter to publish her first novel, *The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, which was later nominated for the A. C. Clarke Award. Its sequel, *The Closed and Common Orbit*, was nominated for Hugo Award for the best novel in 2017.

*Record of a Spaceborn Few* is her third novel and closes of the Wayfarers trilogy. Chambers‘ works have received many favourable reviews from periodicals such as The Times or Guardian.
3 Practical part

The practical part of the thesis consists of a side-by-side translation a representative segment of the novel. Given the above-mentioned focus of the analysis, the segment was selected with regard to its linguistic properties, namely its specific lexis which is conducive to morphological solutions on the part of the translator. The parts for translation were selected so as to cover the most important part of the story, which deals with the destruction of a spaceship Oxomoco and with a murder of one of the crew.
ISABEL

Isabel didn’t want to look. She didn’t want to see it, didn’t want whatever nightmare lay out there to etch itself permanently into memory. But that was exactly why she had to go. Nobody would want to look at it now, but they would one day, and it was important that nobody forgot. Somebody had to look. Somebody had to make a record.

‘Do you have the cams?’ she asked, hurrying toward the exit.

Deshi, one of the junior archivists, fell alongside her, matching her stride. ‘Yeah,’ he said, shouldering a satchel. ‘I took both packs, so we’ll have plenty to— holy shit.’

They’d stepped out of the Archives and into a panic, a heaving chaos of bodies and noise. The plaza was as full as it was on any festival day, but this was no celebration. This was terror in real time.

Deshi’s mouth hung open. Isabel reached out and squeezed his young hand with her wrinkled fingers. She had to lead the way, even as her knees went to jelly and her chest went tight. ‘Get the cams out,’ she said. ‘Start recording.’

Her colleague gestured at his scribe and opened his satchel, and the camera spheres flew out, glowing blue as they absorbed sight and sound. Isabel reached up and tapped the frame of the hud that rested over her eyes.

ISABELA

Nechtěla se podívat. Nechtěla to vidět, nechtěla, aby se jí hrůza, která ležela před ní, navždy vryla do paměti. Ale přesně to byl důvod, proč tam jít musela. Nikdo to nebude chtit vidět. Ne teď, ale přijde den, kdy ano, a je důležité, aby nikdo nezapomněl. Proto se někdo dnes musel podívat a vytvořit záznam.

„Máš kamery?“ zeptala se a spěchala k východu.

Deshi, jeden z mladých archivářů, s ní srovnal krok. „Jo,“ kývl a poplácel kabelu, která mu visela přes rameno. „Vzal jsem obě, budeme potřebovat spoustu – do hajzlu.“

Vykročili z Archivů do uspěchaného, zmateného chaosu těl a různorodých zvuků. Náměstí bylo nacpané jako kterýkoli významný den, ale teď to vypadalo spíš jako scéna z hororu než jako oslava.

Deshi zůstal stát s otevřenou pusou. Isabela se k němu natáhla a sevřela jeho mladou dlani svými vrásčitými prsty. Musela zůstat silná, i když jí zdřevěněly nohy a hrudník se jí sevřel, že sotva dýchala. „Vynedj kamery,“ zašepotala. „Začni nahrávat.“

Její kolega nakreslil jakési gesto na skrib a otevřel kabelu. Ven vylétlo několik záznamových kouli, které se okamžitě modře rozzářily a začaly zaznamenávat
She tapped again, two short, one long. The hud registered the command, and a little blinking light at the corner of her left eye let her know her device was recording as well.

She cleared her throat. ‘This is senior archivist Isabel Itoh, head of the Asteria Archives,’ she said, hoping the hud could pick up her voice over the din. ‘I am with junior archivist Deshi Arocha, and the date is GC standard 129/303. We have just received word of— of—’ Her attention was dragged away by a man crumbling soundlessly to his knees. She shook her head and brought herself centre. ‘—of a catastrophic accident aboard the Oxomo co. Some kind of breach and decompression. It is believed a shuttle crash was involved, but we do not have many details yet. We are now headed to the public cupola, to document what we can.’ She was not a reporter. She did not have to embellish a moment with extraneous words. She simply had to preserve the one unfolding.

She and Deshi made their way through the crowd, surrounded by their cloud of cams. The congregation was dense, but people saw the spheres, and they saw the archivists’ robes, and they made way. Isabel said nothing further. There was more than enough for the cams to capture.

‘My sister,’ a woman sobbed to a helpless-looking patroller. ‘Please, I think she was visiting a friend—’

obraz i zvuk. Isabela pohnula rukou a zaklepala na rámeček průhledového displeje, který jí zakrýval oči. Pak znovu, dvakrát krátce, jednou dlouze. Displej zaznamenal příkaz a blikající světélko v levém rohu ji ujistilo, že její zařízení začalo také nahrávat.

‘Shh, it’s okay, we’re okay,’ a man said to the child he held tight against his chest. ‘We’re gonna be home soon, just hold on to me.’ The child did nothing but bury xy face as far as it would go into xy father’s shirt.

‘Star by star, we go together,’ sang a group of all ages, standing in a circle, holding hands. Their voices were shaky, but the old melody rose clear. ‘In ev’ry ship, a family strong …’ Isabel could not make out much else. Most were crying, or keening, or chewing their lips in silence.

They reached the edge of the cupola, and as the scene outside came into view, Isabel suddenly understood that the clamour they’d passed through was appropriate, fitting, the only reaction that made any sense in the face of this. She walked down the crowded steps, down as close as she could to the viewing glass, close as she could to the thing she didn’t want to see.

The rest of the Exodus Fleet was out there, thirty homestead ships besides her own, orbiting together in a loose, measured cluster. All was as it should be … except one, tangled in a violent shroud of debris. She could see where the pieces belonged – a jagged breach, a hollow where walls and homes had been. She could see sheet metal, crossbeams, odd specks scattered between. She could tell, even from this distance, that many of those specks were not made of metal or plex. They

„Moje sestra,“ vzlykala žena před bezmocně vypadajícím strážným. „Prosím, myslím, že byla na návštěvě u kamarádky—“ „No tak, je to v pořádku, jsme v pořádku,“ utěšoval muž dítě, které pevně držel v náručí. „Brzy půjdeme domů, jen se mě pevně drž.“ Dítě jen zabořilo obličej do otcovy košile.

„Hvězda za hvězdou, kráčíme spolu,“ zpívala skupina lidí. Stáli v kruhu, drželi se za ruce a byly mezi nimi zastoupeny snad všechny věkové skupiny. Hlasy se jim třásly, ale starý nápěv nabýval na síle. „Na každé lodi, rodina sílí…“ Víc Isabela nedokázala rozehnout. Většina lidí plakala, naříkala, nebo se v tichosti kousala do rtů.

Dostali se k okraji kupole a konečně spatřili scénu za okny. V tu chvíli si teprve Isabela uvědomila, že zoufalství lidí, mezi kterými prošli, bylo přiměřené, a vlastně bylo jedinou myslitelnou reakcí na obraz, který se jim zjevil.

Sešla po schodech přeplněných lidmi, aby se dostala co nejbližě k oknu. Tak blízko, jak to jen šlo, k tomu, co nechtila spatřit. Venku byl zbytek Exodanské flotily, třicet sdružených lodí okolo té, na které stáli, všechny společně letící ve volné formaci. Všechno bylo naprosto v pořádku… Kromě jedné lodi, zahalené krvavým závojem
were too curved, too irregular, and they changed shape as they tumbled. They were Human. They were bodies.

Deshi let out a wordless moan, joining the chorus around them.

‘Keep recording,’ Isabel said. She forced the words from her clenched throat. They felt as though they were bleeding. ‘It’s all we can do for them now.’

Not in a million years would Kip have wanted to be held up – that was for kids, not eleven-year-olds – but he couldn’t help but feel kind of envious of the little droolers sitting comfy around their parents’ heads. He was too big to be held, but too short to see over the forest of grown-ups that filled the shuttledock. He stretched up on tiptoe, swaying this way and that, trying to see something other than shoulders and shirt sleeves. But no, whenever he found a gap to look through, all there was beyond was more of the same. Tons of people packed in tight, with kids up top, making the view all the more rosek. Viděla, odkud všechny kusy pocházely – nepravidelná trhlina, díra na místě, kde měly být zdi a domovy. Viděla kovové pláty, rozpěry a mezi nimi roztroušené poletující menší objekty. I na dálku bylo poznat, že nejsou z kovu nebo plexu, na to byly příliš zohýbané, nepravidelné a jejich tvar se měnil, když poletovaly vakuum. Byli to lidé. Byla to těla.

Deshi táhle a beze slov zasténal a jeho hlas se ztratil ve směsici ostatních.

„Nahrávej dál,“ vyrazila Isabela ze sevřeného hrdla.

Bylo to, jako by sami krváceli. „To je to jediné, co pro ně teď můžeme udělat.“

Kip by se nenechal zvednout ani za milion – to byla výsada dětí, a to už on ve svých jedenácti přeci nebyl. I přesto občas závistivě pohlédl na batolata sedící na ramenou svých rodičů. Sice byl na něco takového moc velký, ale stále byl moc malý na to, aby viděl přes nekonečné řady dospělých, kteří zaplnili dok. Zkusil se postavit na špičky, ale ať se naklonil na jakoukoliv stranu, stále neviděl víc, než ramena a rukávy lidí okolo sebe. A když se někde mezi těly přeci jen vytvořila malá mezera, i tak neviděl nic jiného než stejně hustý dav, jen o řadu dál. Tisíce lidi
more impossible. He dropped his heels down and huffed.

His dad noticed, and bent down to speak directly in Kip’s ear. ‘Come on,’ he said. ‘I’ve got an idea.’

It wasn’t easy for them to push their way back out of the middle, but they managed – his dad leading the way, Kip following the grey-striped print of his father’s shirt. It was a nice shirt, the kind of shirt you wore to naming days or weddings, or if someone important came to the hex for dinner. Kip was wearing a nice shirt, too – yellow with white dots. He’d struggled with the buttons, and his mom had had to help him get it closed. He could feel the fabric tugging tight over his chest every time he took a breath, just like he could feel his toes pressing against the ends of his shoes. His mom had shaken her head, and said she’d go over and see if his cousin Wymer had any bigger hand-me-downs lying around. Kip wished he could get brand new clothes, like the ones the import merchants hung outside their stalls, all crisp and straight and without stitches where somebody else’s elbows had poked through. But he could see stitches on his dad’s shirt, too, and on most of the shirts they pushed past. They were still nice shirts, though, as nice as people could manage. Everybody wanted to look good for the Aeluons.

Namačkaných na sobě, s dětmi posazenými na ramenou, znemožňovaly jakýkoliv výhled.

Kip se nakonec vzdal jakékoli snahy a vzdychl.

Jeho otec si toho všiml a naklonil se přímo k jeho uchu. „Pojď,“ řekl. „Mám nápad.“

Nebylo jednoduché se mezi všemi lidmi protlačit ze středu, kde stáli, až úplně dozadu, ale když šel otec první a Kip se s pohledem zafixovaným na jeho šedou pruhovanou košili držel za ním, nakonec to zvládli. Byla to hezká košile. Takovou si člověk vezme na den jmenování, svatbu, nebo když je do hexu pozvaný na večeři někdo důležitý. Kip měl na sobě také hezkou košili – žlutou s bílými puntíky. Měl problém ji vůbec zapnout, a nakonec mu musela pomoci matka, a při každém nádechu cítil, jak se látka napíná a svírá mu hrudník, stejně jako při každém kroku cítil tlak špiček bot na prsty u nohou. Matka zavrtěla hlavou a řekla, že se půjde zeptat bratrance Wymera, jestli nemá nějaké větší staré oblečení. Kip si přál, aby si mohl pořídit úplně nové oblečení. Takové, které visívalo před stánky dovozců, nové, měkké, nevytahané a bez záplat jako důkazů nešikovnosti předchozích majitelů. Ale i košile jeho otcu měla záplaty, a stejně tak většina košil, mezi kterými se proplétali. I tak to nebyly špatné košile. Vypadaly tak
No matter whether the shirts were new or stitched, there was one thing everybody had on: a white band tied around their upper right arm. That was what people wore in the tendays after funerals, so other people knew to cut you some slack and give you some kindness. Everybody had them on now – everybody on the Asteria, everybody in the whole Fleet. Kip didn’t know anybody who’d died on the Oxomoco, but that wasn’t the point, Mom had said while tying cloth around his arm. We all lost family, she’d said, whether we knew them or not.

Kip looked back once they’d cleared the crowd. ‘Where are we going?’ he asked with a frown. He hadn’t been able to see anything where they were, but the empty dock was far away now, and the ship would be arriving any minute. They weren’t going to miss it, were they? They couldn’t.

‘Trust me,’ Dad said. He waved his son along, and Kip could see where they were headed: one of the cargo cranes perched nearby. Some other people had already got the same idea, and were sitting in the empty gaps of the crane’s metal neck. His dad put his hand on Kip’s shoulder. ‘Now, you should never, ever do what we’re about to do any other time. But this is a special occasion, yeah? Do you think you can climb up there with me?’

| pěkně, jak to jen šlo. Všichni chtěli vypadat dobře před aeluony. |
| Atť měli košile jakékoli, zalátané nebo ne, jeden doplněk měli všichni společný: bílou stuhu uvázanou kolem předloktí pravé ruky. |
| Tato stuha se nosila v desetidnech po pohřbech, aby okoli truchlícího vědělo, že mají projevit trochu laskavosti. Dnes je měli všichni – všichni na Asterii i všichni v celé flotile. Kip neznal nikoho z Oxomoca, ale o to nešlo, řekla mu matka, když mu ráno stuhu uvazovala. Všichni jsme ztratili část rodiny, atť už jsme je znali, nebo ne. |
| Jakmile se dostali z davu, Kip se ohlédl. „Kam jdeme?“ zeptal se a zamračil se. Z místa, kde stál předtím, sice nic neviděl, ale teď byl prázdný dok ještě dále a loď měla přistát každou chvíli. Přece ji nepropásnou, že ne? To nešlo. |
| „Věř mi,“ řekl otec a táhl ho dál. Teď už Kip pochopil, kam jdou: mířili k jednomu z jeřábů pro přesun nákladu. Pár lidí už dostalo ten stejný nápad a sedělo na trubkách na jeho ocelovém krku. Otec položil Kipovi ruku na rameno. „Víš, že tohle nikdy jindy nesmíš dělat. Ale dnes je zvláštní událost. Mysliš, že tam zvládneš vylézt?“ |
| Kip přikývl. „Jo,“ odpověděl s bušícím srdcem. Otec neporušoval pravidla moc často. Vlastně nikdy. Matka by tohle za |
Kip nodded. ‘Yeah,’ he said, his heart pounding. Dad didn’t break the rules often. Ever, really. No way would Mom have gone for this. Kip was secretly glad she hadn’t come.

They climbed up the crane’s service ladder, then clambered along the fat metal supports. The crane was way taller than it had looked from the floor, and Kip was a little scared – not like scared scared, he wasn’t a baby – but the climb wasn’t hard. It was kind of like the obstacle course at the playground, only way bigger. Besides, he was with his dad. If Dad said it was okay, it was okay.

The other people already on the crane smiled at them. ‘Pull up a seat,’ one lady shouted.

Dad laughed. ‘Don’t mind if we do.’ He swung himself into an empty spot. ‘Come on, Kip.’

Kip pulled himself alongside, letting his arms hang over one support beam and his feet swing free below another. The metal below his thighs was cold, and definitely not designed for sitting. He could already tell his butt was going to go numb.

But the view … the view was awesome. Being far away didn’t matter so much when you were up top. Everything looked small – the people in the crowd, the patrollers at the edges, the in-charge group waiting right at the dock. ‘Is that the Admiral?’ Kip said, žádnou cenu nedovolila. Kip byl ve skrytu duše rád, že nešla s nimi.

Vyšplhali po služebním žebříku jeřábu a přelezli po tlustých kovových podpěrách. Byli výš, než se zdálo ze země a Kip dostal trochu strach. Ne moc velký, samozřejmě, nebyl přece mimino a šplhání samotné se nakonec ukázalo jednodušší, než čekal. Bylo to skoro jako prolézačky na hřišti, jen mnohem větší. A kromě toho byl s tátou. A když táta řekl, že je to v pořádku, tak to tak bylo.

Lidé, kteří už na jeřábu seděli, se na ně usmívali. „Berte místo,“ zavolala na ně jedna paní.

Otec se zasmál. „To si pište.“ Přehoupl se na kousek volné trubky. „Pojď, Kipe.“

Kip se přitáhl k němu a posadil se, rukama se opíral o podpěrnou tyč a nohy nechal viset dolů. Kov pod jeho stehny studil a tlačil a rozhodně nebyl přizpůsobený k tomu, aby se na něm sedělo. Už teď věděl, že ho bude pěkně bolet zadek, až se zvedne. Ale výhled… Výhled byl parádní. Najednou vůbec nevadilo, že jsou daleko, když vše mohli pozorovat takhle z výšky. Všechno bylo tak malé –lidé v davu, hlídky na okrajích, skupinka lidí, která měla celou akci pod palcem a stála přímo před dokem. „Je to admirálka?“ zeptal se Kip a ukázal na
pointing at a grey-haired woman in a distinctive green council uniform.

“That’s her,” Dad said.

‘Have you ever met her?’

‘No.’

‘I did, last standard,’ said the friendly, shouting lady. She sipped something hot from a canteen. ‘She was on my sanitation team.’

‘No kidding,’ Dad said. ‘What’d you think?’

The lady made a yeah, not bad kind of face. ‘I’d vote for her again.’

Kip felt a knot start to unravel itself, a mass that had been tangled in him ever since the crash. Here was his dad, climbing up a crane with him and chatting easily with strangers.

There was the crowd, assembled in the smartest clothes they had, nobody crying or screaming anymore. There was the Admiral, looking cool and official and powerful. Soon, the Aeluouns would be there, too, and they’d help. They’d make things right again.

The dock lights turned yellow, indicating an incoming vessel. Even up high, Kip could hear the crowd hush. All at once, there it was.

It flew into the dock silently – a smooth, gleaming Aeluon skiff with rounded corners and pearly hull. It almost didn’t look like a ship. Ships were angular. Mechanical.

Something you bolted and welded together, ženu se šedými vlasy oblečenou v typické zelené uniformě rady.

„To je ona,“ odpověděl otec.

„Potkal jsi ji někdy?“

„Ne.“

„Já ano, minulý standard,“ zapojila se do hovoru ta přátelská žena, co na ně předtím volala. Usrkla něčeho horkého z hrnku z jídelny. „Byla v mému sanitačním týmu.“

„Fakt?“ podivil se otec „A co na ni říkáte?“

Žena pokrčila rameny se souhlasným výrazem v obličeji. „Volila bych ji znovu.“

Kip ucítil, jako by mu z ramen začalo padat těžké břemeno, které ho táhlo k zemi už od té nehody. Byl tu jeho otec, který s ním vylezl na vysoký jeřáb a teď si uvolněně povídal s lidmi. Pod ním stál obrovský dav, všichni ve svých nejlepších šatech a nikdo už neplakal ani nekřičel. A tam vzadu stála admirálka, ze které vyzařovala moc a ledový klid. Brzy dorazí aeluoni a pomůžou jim. Všechno bude zase v pořádku.

Světla v doku se razzářila žlutou barvou, značící přílet plavidla. I v té výšce, v jaké byli, slyšel Kip, jak to davem zašumělo. Úplně najednou, z ničeho nic to přišlo.

Plavidlo neslyšně vlétlo do doku bylo malé a hladké, mělo zaoblené rohy a jeho trup zářil aeluonskými perleťovými odstínů.
pie by piece, chunk by chunk. This ship, on the other hand, looked like it had been made from something melted, something poured into a mould and polished for days. The entire crowd held their breath together.

‘Stars, that’s something,’ Dad said quietly.

‘Get ’em all the time over at cargo,’ the lady said. ‘Never get tired of it.’

Kip didn’t say anything. He was too busy looking at the most beautiful thing he’d ever seen. He almost asked his dad what this kind of ship was called, but his dad obviously hadn’t seen one before, and Kip didn’t know the lady, so he didn’t want to ask her. He’d look up Aeluon ships on the Linkings when he got home. He knew all the types of Human ships, and he also liked to know stuff about alien bodies, but he hadn’t ever thought to learn about their ships. It was easy, in the Fleet, to think that Human ships were all there was.

A hatch yawned open. How, Kip couldn’t say, because there weren’t any edges on the outer hull to suggest doors or seams. The crowd broke into a cheer as three Aeluons stepped out. Kip had really wanted to see them up close, but even at a distance, they made his heart race. Bare silver heads he knew were covered in tiny scales. Patches on their cheeks that swirled with colour. Weird grey and white and black clothes that, he

Skoro nevypadalo jako loď. Lodě měly být hranaté, mechanické. Hromada součástí, kousek po kousku pospojovaných k sobě.

Tahle loď naopak vypadala, jako by se do své současné podoby roztekla a technici ji pak několik dní usilovně leštili. Snad každý při tom pohledu téměř zapomněl dýchat.

„U hvězd, to je něco,“ zašep탈 tiše otec. „To je něco jiného než nákladů,“ prohlásila žena. „Tohle se nikdy neomrzí.“

Kip mlčel. Loď ho naprosto ohromila a nemohl se na ni vynádvít. Chtěl se zeptat otece, jak se takovému typu plavidla říká, ale pak si uvědomil, že otec něco takového vidí poprvé v životě stejně jako on. Mohl se zeptat té ženy, ale neznal ji, tak neřekl nic.

Až se dostane domů, vyhledá si aeluonské lodě na Spojích.

Věděl všechno možné o lidských lodích a také ho zajímalo, jak vypadají různé rasy mimozemšťanů, ale nikdy ho nenapadlo zjišťovat, jak vypadají jejich plavidla. Ve flotile nebylo těžké zapomenout, že existují i jiná než lidská.

V lodi se otevřel východ. Kip nevěděl jak, protože na hladkém povrchu nic nenaznačovalo tomu, že by tam nějaký vůbec byl. Ven vystoupili tři aeluoni a dav v hale zjáhával. Kip by si je rád prohlédl zblízka, ale i pohled z takové vzdálenosti mu dokázal pořádně rozpumpovat srdce.
guessed, had never been anybody’s hand-me-downs.

‘Why are they wearing masks?’ Kip asked.
‘Can’t they breathe oxygen?’

‘They can, and do,’ Dad said. ‘But sapients who don’t live around Humans tend to find us, ah … pungent.’

‘What’s pungent mean?’

‘We stink, kid.’ The lady laughed into her canteen.

‘Oh,’ Kip said. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. And the longer he sat there, the less he was sure how he felt about anything. His insides began to tangle themselves again as he watched the Admiral greet their otherworldly neighbours. Her uniform no longer looked cool, the crowd no longer looked smartly dressed, and the dock no longer looked normal, not with a big flying gemstone resting in the middle of it. The Aeluons were here to clean up a mess the Fleet couldn’t, a mess that wouldn’t have happened without busted ships and worn-out tech. They shook hands Human-style with the stinky, stitched-up council, and beneath Kip’s excitement, beneath his wonder, a sadness spread.

He watched the Aeluons, and he felt ashamed.
SAWYER

The trick to living on Mushtullo was knowing which sunrise to wait for. Ressoden came up first, but only spacer merchants and little kids made the mistake of going out that early. Ressoden was dinky, capable of providing usable light but not enough warmth to burn off the cold. The predawn fog carried the kind of insidious wetness that wormed its way to your bones, and you couldn’t be blamed for deciding to wait for the third sun – big, fat Pelus – to banish the clouds entirely. But that, too, was a rookie mistake. You had about a half an hour after Pelus’ appearance until the surrounding swamps started to evaporate, and the roasting midday air became thick enough to chew. The second sunrise – Makarev – was where it was at. Makarev held court for an hour and sixteen minutes, just long enough for you to get up and catch a tram to wherever it was you needed to go. Not too damp, not too muggy, not too hot, not too cold. You didn’t need to layer, and you wouldn’t show up to work pohromadě jen silou vůle svých mechaniků. Aeluoni si po lidském způsobu potřásli rukou s celou zapáchající a zazáplatovanou radou a Kipovo nadšení a obdiv nahradil smutek. Pozoroval aeluony a začal se stydět.

SAWYER

Každý obyvatel Mushtulla moc dobře věděl, na který východ slunce si počkat. Jako první vycházel Ressoden, ale jen obchodníci nebo malé děti udělaly tu chybu, že si kvůli němu přivstali. Ressoden byl maličký, dokázal sice poskytnout dostatek světla, ale ne tolik tepla, aby rozechrál noční nízké teploty. Mlha, která město zahalovala před rozedněním s sebou nesla takový ten druh vlhkosti, který se zavrtal hluboko do morku kostí a nikdo se nemohl divit, že si většina cizinců raději přispala až do východu třetího slunce, obřího Peluse, který teprve dovedl mlhu úplně rozehnat. Ale i to byla začátečnická chyba. Asi půl hodiny po výchuodu Peluse se začaly vypařovat všechny bažiny v okolí a horký polední vzduch zhoustl natolik, že by se dal krájet. Druhý východ – Makarev – to bylo ono. Makarev věvodil obloze hodinu a šestnáct minut, což bylo akorát na to, aby člověk sedl na vlak a dostal se kam potřeboval. Nebylo příliš vlhko, dusno, horko ani chladno. Nebylo potřeba několik vrstev
with a sweaty shirt that wouldn’t dry out. Ideal.

Sawyer pressed his palm against the inner wall of his capsule bunk, and he could tell that Makarev was just about there. His capsule was supposedly temperature controlled – and okay, sure, he hadn’t frozen to death or anything – but the insulation was as cheap as his rent. He lay under his blankets, waiting for the wall to hit that level of warmth that meant … now. He sat up on his mattress and hit one of the buttons on the wall. The sink shelf slid out, a thick rectangle with a basin and a pop-up mirror and the almost-empty box of dentbot packs he needed to restock. He rinsed his face, drank some water, cleaned his mouth, combed his hair into place. He pushed a different wall button. The sink retracted, and a larger shelf extended, holding a quick-cooker and a storage box full of just-add-water meals. He knew he had a long day at work ahead, so he opted for two packs of Magic Morning Power Porridge, which were still heating up when he checked his scrib and discovered he had no job to get to.

He didn’t bother to finish reading the soulless form letter his (former) employer had sent. He knew what it said. Unforeseen funding shortage, blah blah, sincerely regret the abrupt notice, blah blah, wish you the very best of luck in future, blah blah blah. Sawyer fell back onto his pillow and shut his eyes.
He was nineteen, he’d been working since twelve, and he’d had ten jobs by now. The math there was not in his favour.

‘Great,’ he sighed, and for a while, he considered staying in bed all day, blowing the extra creds needed to cool his capsule while Pelus was out. But now his creds were even more precious than before, and if he’d been laid off, that meant everybody else at the factory had, too. They’d all be descending on the commerce square, ingratiating themselves to business owners until one of them offered a job. That was how things worked with Harmagians, anyway. No résumés or interviews or anything. Just walk up and hope they like you. With other species, finding a job was a less tiring to-do, but Harmagian jobs were where the creds were at. There were jobs in his neighbourhood, probably, but Human-owned work didn’t get you very far. Much smarter to head out to the square and try his luck. He could do it. He’d done it before.

With a weary will, he sat back up, ate his porridge, and put on clean clothes (these, too, were stored in the wall). He scooted off the end of his mattress and out the capsule hatch, planting his feet on the ladder outside in a practised way. He gripped his doorframe as he started to lower himself down, and immediately withdrew his hand with disgust. ‘Oh, come on,’ he sighed, grimacing at the grey gunk smeared across his fingers. Creep a od té doby vystřídal deset pracovních pozic. Čísla mu nehrála do karet.

„Super,“ povzdychl si a chvíli zvažoval, že v posteli zůstane celý den a vyhodí své zbývající kredy na klimatizaci kapsle, do které za chvíli začne pražit Pelus. Ale kredy teď pro něj byly ještě mnohem cennější než dříve. A kromě toho, jestli vyhodili jeho, znamenalo to, že vyhodili také všechny ostatní zaměstnance továrny. Všichni teď nejspíš zamíří na obchodní náměstí a budou se snažit vlichotit se podnikatelům, dokud jim některý z nich nenabídne práci. Takhle to s harmagiany fungovalo. Žádné životopisy, pohovory, nic takového. Člověk k nim musel přijít a prostě doufat, že se jim zalibí. Sehnat si práci u někoho jiné rasy bylo jednoduší, ale jen u harmagianů se točily velké kredy. Asi by si mohl sehnat i zaměstnání poblíž své kapsle, ale práce pro lidí nikdy nebyla příliš ceněná. Mnohem lepší bude zajít na náměstí a zkusit štěstí. Věděl, že na to má. Nedělal to poprvé.

Přinutil se znovu se posadit, snísl kaši a obléci se do čistých šatů (i ty měl příhodně uschované ve zdi). Sesunul se z matrace a ven z kapsle, kde se nacvičeným pohybem zachytil za žebřík. Chytřel se dveřního rámu a začal se spouštět dolů, ale pak ruku s nechutí stáhl. „Ale no tak,“ vzdychl a znechuceně se zašklebil na šedý sliz na prstech. Plazivá plíseň. Tahle šedá, mastná věc milovala noční mlhu a rostla tak rychle,
mould. The grey, greasy stuff loved the night-time fog, and it grew so fast you could clean it up before bed and find a fresh new mat in the morning, just like the one inching over Sawyer’s tiny home now. He wiped his palm on an old shirt and resumed his exit, taking care to not get any of the gunk on his clothes. He had new bosses to impress, and this already wasn’t his day.

It would be, though, he decided, hoisting his mood as he climbed down. He’d go out there, and he’d find a job. He’d find something even better than the job he’d had yesterday.

He headed out into Mushtullo’s second morning, weaving his way through the neighbourhood. The narrow paved streets were as packed as the tall buildings that lined them, and the general flow of foot traffic was headed for the tram stations, like always. He saw a few other better-dressed-than-usual people in the crowd, and he quickened his step. Had to get to the square before the good stuff got snapped up.

Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted something out of the ordinary: a small crowd – old people, mostly – gathered by that little weather-worn statue of an Exodan homesteader over by the grocery. They were decorating the statue, laying wreaths of flowers and ribbons over it, lighting candles around its base, scrubbing creep mould off of it. Sawyer dimly remembered talk at work...
a few days before, something about a homesteader exploding, or decompressing, or something. Some horrible shit. He figured that was the reason for the crowd, and would’ve kept going on his way were it not for one face he recognised: Shani Brenner, one of the supervisors from the factory. She wasn’t headed for the trams, she was helping some old – no, ancient – lady light a candle. Did she not know about the layoffs? Had she not checked her scrib?

Sawyer hesitated. He didn’t want to waste time, but Shani was all right. She’d shared her lunch with Sawyer once, when he’d been short on creds. This day hadn’t had a lot going for it yet. Maybe, Sawyer thought, helping somebody out would get the universe back on his side.

He changed course and hurried toward the statue. ‘Hey, Shani!’ he called with a wave.

Shani looked up, first with confusion, then with recognition. She patted the old woman (who was sitting on the ground, now), then met Sawyer halfway. ‘Shitty morning, huh?’ she said, rubbing the back of her neck.

‘You heard,’ Sawyer said.

‘Yeah. Got a letter, same as I bet you did. No idea it was coming. Stingy bastards. I gave Tolged a thanks-for-being-my-boss gift three days ago and everything.’


Copak nevěděla o tom vyhazovu? Nezkontrolovala si skrib?


Změnil směr a spěchal k soše. „Hej, Shani!“ zavolal a zamával.

Shani zvedla hlavu, nejdřív marnit čas, ale Shani měl celkem rád. Jednou se s ním rozdělila o oběd, když neměl peníze. Ještě měl dost času. Možná, pomyslel si, když někomu pomůžu, karma mi to vrátí.

„Zasraný ráno, co?“ řekla a třela si krk.

„Tak jsi to slyšela,“ řekl Sawyer.

„Jo. Dostala jsem asi stejně dopis jako ty. Fakt jsem to nečekala. Hájžlově. Pár dní zpátky jsem dokonce dala Tolgedovi hrnek s nápisem ,nejlepší šéf.‘“
Sawyer jerked a thumb toward the street.
‘Aren’t you going to the square?’

Shani shook her head. ‘Not today.’ She
nodded to the statue. ‘That’s my grandma
over there. You hear about the Oxomoco?’

‘That homesteader that …?’

‘Yeah. She was born there. Came here when
she was seven, but still. Roots, y’know?’
Shani eyed Sawyer. ‘You Exodan?’

‘I mean …’ Wasn’t everybody, at one point
or another? ‘Like way, way back. I— I don’t
know what ship, or anything. I’ve never
been.’

Shani shrugged. ‘Still counts. Wanna come
sit with us?’

Sawyer blinked. ‘Thanks, but I—’

‘There’ll be jobs tomorrow,’ Shani said. ‘I’m
not worrying about it, and neither should you.
We’ll both land on our feet, yeah? Things
work out.’

Over Shani’s shoulder, Sawyer could see
other people joining Grandma Brenner on the
ground. Some were weeping. Some held
hands, or passed a flask around. Some were
speaking in unison, almost like a chant, but
he could only catch a few words. His Ensk
was scattershot at best. Shani smiled at
Sawyer. ‘Up to you,’ she said as she walked
away. She, too, sat on the ground, and held
her grandmother close.

Sawyer palcem naznačil směr k ulici.
„Nejdeš na náměstí?“ Shani zavrtěla hlavou.
„Dneska ne.“ Kývla směrem k sose. „To je
moje babča. Slyšels o Oxomocu?“

„To je ten osadník co…“

„Jo. Narodila se tam. Sem přišla v sedmi,
ale stejně. Kořeny, chápeš.“ Shani si ho
pozorně prohlédla. „Jseš Exodan?“

„Já…“ Nebyli všichni jednou Exodané?
„Jakož hodně hodně dávno. Nevím jaká
loď, nebo tak. Já tam nikdy nebyl.“

Shani pokrčila rameny. „To stačí. Sedneš si
s náma?“

Sawyer zamrkal. „Díky, ale já…“

„Práce bude i zejtra,“ mávla rukou Shani.
„Toho se nebojím a ty bys taky neměl.
Budem oba v pohodě, ne? Nějak bude.“

Přes Shanino rameno Sawyer viděl, jak se
k babče Brenner přidávají ostatní a sedají si
k ní na zem. Někteří plakali. Někteří se
derželi za ruce, nebo si podávali placatku.
Někteří cosi recitovali, společně,
jednohlasně. Rozuměl z toho jen pár
slovům, jeho Anština by potřebovala
pořádně oprášit.

Shani se usmála. „Je to na tobě,“ řekla
a otočila se od něj. Také se přidala
to sedícímu hloučku a chytla babču za ruku.

Sawyer se nepřidal, ale ani neodešel. Neměl
žádný důvod tu zůstat, ale přesto… přesto.
Sawyer did not join them, but neither did he turn back. There was no reason for him to stay, and yet … and yet. He imagined the jam-packed frenzy that awaited him at the commerce square, the lines of eager people desperate to impress. It was the antithesis of the scene in front of him, this quiet mourning, this shared respect. The idea of joining them felt awkward. He didn’t want to intrude. He wasn’t one of them, didn’t belong there. But as he watched them share tears and songs and company, he wished that he did. He didn’t have anything he was a part of like that. Even in grief, it looked like a nice thing to have. Maybe especially in grief.

He thought, as he rode the tram to the square, of the recited words he’d managed to make out. They circled his mind, over and over as he watched crowded neighbourhoods blur through mouldy windows.

SAWYER

He stood at the railing outside the dockside bioscans, luggage in hand, breathing in the recycled air. It was different than the air he knew, for sure. It wasn’t what he’d call good air, not like what you’d get around a forest or a field. There was a slight metallic edge to it, and though the walkways were lined with healthy planters exhaling oxygen back his way, something about each breath just felt artificial. There was no wind here, no rain. The air moved because Humans told it to, Představil si chaos a bzukot přeplněného obchodního náměstí, ty zástupy lidí bez práce, snažící se udělat dojem. Byl to naprostý opak scény před ním, tichého smutku a vzpomínání, sdíleného respektu. Připadal by si hloupě, kdyby se přidal. Nechtěl je rušit. Nebyl jedním z nich a nepatřil mezi ně. Ale když viděl, jak sdílejí své slzy, písněspolečně se modlí a těší se ze vzájemné přítomnosti, přál si, aby patřil. Neměl nic, čeho by byl součástí, jako tihle lidé. I když smutnili, vypadalo to, že je hezké něco takového mit. A možná to bylo právě proto, že smutnili.

Když seděl ve vlaku, přemýšlel o těch slovech, kterým v jejich básních porozuměl. Opakovala se, kroužila v jeho mysli, když pozoroval venkovní shon přes okna pokrytá plísní.
and maybe in that, it had lost something along the way.

But Sawyer smiled. Different was what he was after, and everything he’d encountered in the twenty minutes since coming aboard was as different as could be. What struck him was the practicality of the architecture, the intense economy. On Mushtullo, people embellished. There were mouldings on the tops of walls. Roofs twisted and fences spiralled. Even the ships were filigreed. Not here. Nothing in the foundation of this vessel had been wasted on sentiment.

But while the ship’s skeleton was simple, the people within had spent centuries fleshing it out. The metal walls were disguised with inviting paint: warm tan, soft orange, living green. On his way to the railing, he’d come upon an enormous mural that had stopped him in his tracks. He’d stood for a minute there, as other travellers split their busy stream around him. The mural was vibrant, almost gaudy, a spree of colour and curves depicting dancing Exodans with a benignly burning sun beneath their feet and a starry sky above. Myriad professions were on display – a farmer, a doctor, a tech, a musician, a pilot, a teacher leading children. It was an ordinary sort of theme, and yet there was something about it – the lack of actual ground, perhaps, or something in the sweeping style – that was undeniably foreign.
You’d never see a mural like that on Mushtullo.

Sawyer let his reality sink in: he was in the Fleet. The Fleet! He was finally, actually there, not just reading reference files or pestering elderly folks for any scraps they could remember about what their parents had told them about the ships they’d left behind. He’d made it. He’d made it, and now, everything was right there for him to explore.

There were no other species in the crowd, and it left him both giddy and jarred. The only times he’d seen anything close to this many Humans in one place was on holidays or at parties, and even then, you’d be sure to see other sapients in the mix. There’d been merchants from elsewhere on the transport with him, but as soon as they reached a branching sign that read Cargo Bays on the right and Central Plaza on the left, all the scales and claws went right.

Everyone around him now had two hands, two feet, soft skin, hairy heads. He’d never blended into a public group like this, and yet, he felt like he stuck out more than he ever had.

Sawyer had thought perhaps some part of him would recognise this place, that he’d feel himself reversing the steps his great-great-grandparents had taken. He’d read accounts of other grounders visiting the Fleet. They’d written about how connected they felt to their
ancestors, how they felt immediate kinship with the people there. Sawyer hadn’t felt that yet, and part of him was a touch disappointed. But no matter. He’d been there for all of twenty minutes, and the only person he’d talked to was the patch scan attendant. So far, he’d dipped a toe in the water. It was time to dive in.

He took an elevator down to the market floor, an expansive grid of shop fronts and service centres. It wasn’t like other marketplaces he’d been to, where everything sprawled and piled as if it were alive. The Fleet, as he’d read and as had already proven true, was a place of orderly geometry. Every corner had been considered, measured, and considered again. Space efficiency was the top order of business, so the original architects had provided future generations of shopkeepers with defined lots that could be assigned and repurposed as needed. The end result was, on the surface, the tidiest trading hub Sawyer had ever seen. But once he got past the neat exteriors, the underlying business was bewildering. Dozens of signs, dozens of displays, hundreds of customers, and he had no idea where anything was.

He eyed the places that served food – all open-air (if that was the right term to use inside a ship), with shared eating tables corralled behind the waist-high metal walls that defined each lot’s edges. Sawyer found himself drawn toward a cheery, clean cafe.
called My Favourite. The menu posted outside was in both Klip and Ensk, and the fare was things he recognised – beansteak skewers, hoppers, jam cakes. It looked like a respectable spot for a nonthreatening meal. Sawyer pointed his feet elsewhere. That was a place meant for merchants and visitors. Tourists. He wasn’t here to be a tourist. He was after something real.

He spied another eatery of the same size and shape. Jojo’s, the sign read. Or it would have, if the pixels on the second j hadn’t been twitching themselves nearly illegible. There was no posted menu. The only other signage displayed the hours of business, which were in Ensk numerals and Ensk numerals only. (Standard time, though. They only used Solar for age, or so he’d been told.) Behind the corral, some folks in algae-stained coveralls wolfed down whatever was for lunch. A group of five or six elderly folks were arguing over a game taking place on an old pixel board. Nobody had any luggage.

Perfect.

No one greeted Sawyer as he walked in. Few looked up. There were two people behind the counter: a wiry young man chopping something, and an imposing middle-aged woman peeling shells off steamed red coaster bugs. The woman was absorbed in a loud vid on a nearby projector – a Martian period drama, it looked like. She cracked each shell oddělovaly výměry jednotlivých stánků se nacházely sdílené stolky. Sawyera zaujala veselá, čistá kavárna s příhodným jménem Moje oblíbenkyně. Menu, které viselo před vchodem bylo v kipštině i anštině a figurovala na něm i jídla, která poznával. Fazolové špízy, kobylky, marmeládové koláčky. Vypadalo to, že by se tam Sawyer mohl slušně a bezpečně najíst. Sawyer se ale otočil jinam. Tahle kavárna tu byla pro obchodníky a návštěvníky. Pro turisty. A on tu jako turista nebyl, on toužil po něčem víc.

Vyhlédli si jinou jídelnu stejného tvaru a velikosti, nad kterou se houpala cedule s nápisem Jojo’s. Nebo by to tak bylo, kdyby pixely tvořící druhé j nestávkovaly a svítily, jak měly. Nikde neviděl žádnou nabídku a na jediné ceduli, která na stěně visela, byly vypsány otevírací hodiny. Pouze anštinou. (Ale standardního času. Pro věk přy používali pozemský čas).

Za zábradlím do sebe několik chlapíků v overalech ušpiněných od řas házelo cokoli, co bylo zrovna dnes v nabídce. Asi pět nebo šest starších lidí se dohadovalo o hře, která se odehrávala na obrazovce. Nikdo neměl žádná zavazadla.

Perfektní.

Když Sawyer vstoupil, nikdo ho nepozdravil. Několik lidí zvedlo hlavy. Za pultem stáli dva lidé: kostnatý mladík, který zrovna něco krájel, a impozantní starší žena,
segment with speedy precision, without so much as a glance down at her work. Sawyer had no real way of knowing, but he got the unshakable sense that this was her place. The woman gave a short, mocking laugh. ‘This Solan shit,’ she said in Ensk, shaking her head at the projector. The vid music hit a melodramatic crescendo as a character in a clunky exosuit succumbed to a sandstorm. ‘Why does anybody watch this?’ ‘You watch it,’ an old woman piped up from the board game table. ‘It’s like a shipwreck,’ the shell-cracker replied. ‘Once it starts, I can’t look away.’ The scene changed. A tearful group of terraformers sat huddled in their dome. ‘This damned planet,’ one actor cried. He wasn’t about to win any awards for this, but stars, he was trying. ‘This damned planet!’ ‘This damned planet!’ the woman repeated, laughing again. Her eyes snapped over as she noticed Sawyer at last. ‘Hey,’ she said, glancing at his bag. ‘What can I get ya?’ Sawyer walked up to the counter. He was more or less fluent in Ensk, having crammed Linking language lessons hard over the past few years, but the only person he’d been able to practise speaking with had been the lady at the shoe shop back home, and her slang was about twenty years out of date. He screwed
up his courage, and asked: ‘Do you have a menu?’

Every person in Jojo’s looked up. It took Sawyer a moment to realise – accent. His accent. He didn’t have the distinctive snap of an Exodan, the silky smoothness of a Martian, the muddle of someone who did a lot of bouncing around. His face said Human. His vowels said Harmagian.

The woman blinked. ‘No menu,’ she said. She jerked a thumb back toward the wiry man, still chopping away. ‘It’s ninth day. That means we’ve got twice-round pickle on a quickbun and red coaster stew. Only, we’re out of red coaster stew.’ Exoskeleton crunched between her hands. ‘I gotta make more, and that’s gonna be at least an hour.’

‘Okay,’ Sawyer said. ‘I’ll have the other one.’

‘The pickle?’

‘Yeah.’

‘You ever had twice-round pickle?’

Sawyer grinned. ‘Nope.’

The woman grinned back, but it wasn’t a good grin, not the kind of grin that shook hands with his own. This was a different look, a look that knew something he didn’t. Sawyer felt his mood slip a bit. He was pretty sure the board game crew was still watching him.

Sawyer došel až k pultu. Anksy mluvil více méně plynule, posledních pár let poctivě projížděl všechny možné lekce na Spojích, ale jediná osoba, se kterou si kdy mohl cvičit mluvení, byla stará dáma, která na Mushtullu prodávala boty, a její slang byl alespoň dvacet let zastaralý. Sebral odvahu a zeptal se: „Máte menu?“

Všichni hosté okamžitě vzhlédli. Sawyer chvíli nečápá, ale pak mu to došlo – přízvuk.


Žena zamrkala. „Žádné menu,“ řekla nakonec. Palcem ukázala směrem ke kostnatému muži, stále zabranému do krájení. „Je devátý den. To znamená, že máme dvojitou rychlokvašhousku nebo dušené červenobřežníky. Ale červenobřežníci došli.“ V rukou jí praskla další skořápka. „Udělám novou várku, ale bude to nejdřív za hodinu.“

„Dobře,“ řekl Sawyer. „Dám si to druhé.“

„Rychlokavašky?“

„Jo.“

„Měls někdy dvojitou rychlokvašku?“

Sawyer se usmál. „Ne.“
‘Okay,’ the woman said. ‘One pickle bun. Comes with tea.’

It took him a second to realise she was asking him a question. ‘Tea would be great.’ She searched for a mug by way of reply. Sawyer took a chance, trying to coax more conversation. ‘Are you Jojo?’

‘No,’ the woman said flatly. ‘Jojo was my mom.’

‘And she was a lot nicer than this one,’ an old man with a pipe added from the back.

‘Ch,’ the woman said, rolling her eyes. ‘You only say that ’cause she slept with you once.’

‘I would’ve thought she was nice even if we hadn’t.’

‘Yeah, well. She always was a sucker for ugly things.’

The board game crew cracked up – the old man in particular – and the woman grinned, a real grin this time. She filled a mug from a large decanter and set it on the counter as the wiry man silently assembled Sawyer’s lunch. Sawyer tried to see what was going into what he’d just ordered, but the man’s body blocked his view. Something was chopped, something was ladled, a few bottles were shaken. Twice-round pickle looked … involved.

The woman stared at Sawyer. ‘Oh,’ he said, understanding. He hadn’t paid. He pushed Žena se také usmála, ale nebyl to ten dobrý druh úsměvu, takový, který by člověka uklidnil nebo mu zlepšil náladu. Tohle byl úsměv typu ,vim něco, co ty ne.’ Sawyerovo počáteční nadšení trochu opadlo. Byl si celkem jistý, že skupina od herního stolku ho stále pozoruje.

„Fajn,“ kývla žena. „Jedna rychlokvašhouska. K tomu čaj.“ Chvilku trvalo, než mu došlo, že to byla otázka. „Čaj si dám rád.“ Žena málo odpovědi sáhla pro hrnek. Sawyer vycitil příležitost rozvést další konverzaci. „Jste Jojo?“

„Ne,“ řekla bez jakýchkoli emotí. „Jojo byla moje máma.“ „A byla mnohem milejší než tahle,“ prohlášil z rohu muž s dýmkou.

„Tss,“ protočila panenky. „To říkáš jen proto, že se s tebou jednou vyspala.“ „Myslel bych si to i kdyby to neudělala.“ „Jo, jasně. No, vždycky měla slabost pro ošklivý věci.“ Herní skupinka se rozesmála – muž s dýmkou obzvlášť hlasitě – a žena se zakřenila, tentokráte dopravdy. Naplnila hrnek tekutinou z velké karafy a postavila ho na pult. Kostnatý kuchař mezitím připravoval Sawyerův oběd. Sawyer se nakláněl, aby viděl, z čeho se jeho
Sawyer thought. He’d only brought one bag of essentials and didn’t have much he was willing to part with, not for the sake of a sandwich. He scolded himself for not planning for this with a bag of circuit chips or something. ‘Do you need some help in the kitchen? I could wash dishes.’

Now everyone laughed. Sawyer had no idea what the joke was, but he was starting to wonder if the tourist cafe would’ve been the better option.

The woman leaned against the counter. ‘Where are you from?’

‘Mushtullo.’

‘What now?’

He looked around for a scanner.

The woman pursed her lips. ‘Don’t take creds,’ she said.

Sawyer was elated. He’d heard about this – Exodan merchants who operated on barter and barter only. But there was a problem: that was as far as his knowledge of the practice went, and he didn’t know what the protocol was. He waited for her to suggest an acceptable trade. Nothing came. ‘What would be good?’ he asked.

Another short laugh, like the one the sandstorm victim received. ‘I dunno. I dunno what you’ve got.’

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The woman leaned against the counter. ‘Where are you from?’

‘Mushtullo.’

‘What now?’
‘Mushtullo.’ No response. ‘Central space.’

She raised her eyebrows. ‘Huh. You got family here?’

‘No,’ Sawyer said. ‘But my family came from here.’

‘Oh,’ the woman said, as if she understood everything now. ‘I see. Okay. You got a place to stay?’

‘I figured I’d sort that out once I got here.’

‘Oh boy,’ the woman said under her breath. The wiry man handed her a plate, which she pushed across the counter. ‘Here. On the house. The food of your ancestors.’

‘Wow, you sure?’ Sawyer said.

‘Well, now I’m not.’

‘Sorry, um … thank you.’ He took both plate and mug. ‘That’s really kind.’

The woman resumed her shell cracking without another word. Sawyer looked around, hoping one of the groups might wave him over. None did. The algaeists were stacking up their thoroughly cleaned dishes, and the old folks had resumed their board game. Sawyer dropped his bag in an empty chair and sat in another alongside it. He studied his food — a large mound of wet, shredded vegetables, piled on top of two halves of a nondescript bun, dressed with whatever Jojo’s daughter’s assistant had dashed on top of it. He lifted one of the halves. It leaked,
sending purple liquid running down his forearm. He paused before opening his mouth. There was a smell, fetid and sharp, maybe a bit fishy. He thought of the other customers, chowing down with satisfaction. He took a bite. His throat tightened, his sinuses shot open, and his bravery died. The stuff tasted exactly as it smelled, only now it was inescapable, mingling with a bitter, tangy undercurrent he wasn’t sure he wanted to identify. He couldn’t taste the bread, but despite the sour liquid now dripping all over his hands, the texture was distractingly dry. The pickle didn’t crunch, as he’d expected. It just softly surrendered.

It was, without a doubt, the worst thing he’d ever eaten.

Okay, he thought. This is okay. It’s an adventure. Not the start he’d been hoping for, but it was a start, and that was something. He forced another bite of pickle, washing it down with a huge swig of tea (the tea, at least, was good). There was no way he wasn’t going to finish his meal. This was a test. The locals were watching, his ancestors were watching, everybody back home who thought this plan of his was bonkers was watching. He would clean his plate, and find a place to stay, and everything would be great.

Sawyer heard the woman laugh again. He thought for a moment it was directed at him, but no. Another Martian terraformer had died.
KIP

Lunch breaks were the best part of Kip’s day. No teachers, no job trials, no parents. Nothing that needed doing or that he might screw up. Kip savoured every second. This was his time, and he always did the same thing with it: get a choko and a hopper at Grub Grub, park himself on the bench facing the oxygen garden, and try to stretch out his brief bit of freedom as long as possible.

Chane in biology class said Sianat Pairs could slow time with their brains, and Kip didn’t think that was true, but if it was, he’d seriously trade an arm or something if it meant he could do that. Both arms, maybe. Maybe even his eyes. Okay, not his eyes. But limbs, definitely.

Somebody jumped him from behind, pulling his shirt up over the back of his head. ‘Tek tem, fucko!’

Kip had his shirt back down and a hand swinging before he could get a look at where it would land. Not a mean fist or anything – he’d never punched anybody for reals. Just

odrazovali a nazývali ho bláznem, ho teď pozorovali. Dojí svůj oběd, najde si místo na přespání a všechno bude v pořádku.

Sawyer zaslechl ženin smích. V prvním okamžiku si myslel, že je mířený na něj, ale nebyl. To jen na obrazovce zemřel další marťanský terraformista.

KIP


Někdo k němu zezadu přiskočil a přetáhl mu triko přes hlavu. „Tek tem, sráči!“

Kip si tričko stáhl a bez míření se rozehnal po útočníkovi. Ne pěstí nebo tak – nikdy nikoho doopravdy nepraštil. Měl to být jen lehký políček, ne dost silný, aby bolel nebo dokonce způsobil modřinu.
a soft slap that wouldn’t even hurt, much less bruise.

His hand landed in Ras’ ribs. Ras shoved the slap away with one hand and grabbed for Kip’s choko with the other. ‘Gimme.’

‘Dosh,’ said Kip, stretching his drink out of reach. ‘Fuck off.’ In one fast move, he reached out and mussed Ras’ hair.

Ras withdrew at that, as he always did. ‘Aw, come on,’ he said, combing away the minimal damage with his fingers. ‘Uncalled for.’

Kip chuckled into his drink, scrunching his eyes tight. He wiped his hand on his pants, trying to get rid of the hair glue remnants he’d picked up. Ras always put too much shit in his hair.

The scuffle ended as fast as it had started. He and his friend sat in an easy slump, watching the crowd for the unlikely chance of something interesting happening. Kip passed the choko bottle to Ras. Ras took a long pull of the sweet fizz and passed it back. It was a rhythm they fell into without any thought. There’d been a lot of shared snacks over the years. That was what had eventually led to them getting assigned work day and school day schedules that didn’t overlap – too many passed-between packs of cake bites in class. A persistent disruption to other students, M

Jeho ruka přistála Rasovi na žebrech. Ras ji odstrédl a natáhl se po Kipově čoku. „Naval.“

„Ani náhodou,“ prohlásil Kip a ruku s nápojem odtáhl co nejdál. „Naser si.“ Pak jedním rychlým pohybem znovu natáhl ruku a počehral Rasovy vlasy.

Po tomhle se Ras vzdal, jak vždycky. „Ale no tak,“ zamumlal a začal napravovat minimální poškození svého účesu. „To jsem si nezasloužil.“

Kip se zasmál do svého kelímku. Otřel si ruku do kalhot a snažil se zbavit zbytků gelu, který mu na ní zůstal. Ras neznal míru, když přišlo na to, co všechno si patlal do vlasů.

Rebane had called him and Ras. Whatever. At least they still had lunch at the same time.

‘You know Amira, at the tech shop?’ Ras said.

‘Yeah.’

‘I think she likes me.’

Kip almost got choko up his nose. ‘Okay.’

‘Seriously,’ Ras said. ‘I saw her looking at me.’

Kip kept laughing. ‘Okay.’

‘What? I did!’

‘Amira. From the tech shop.’

‘That’s what I said.’

‘She’s, like, twenty-five or something.’

‘So?’

‘So she probably just thought your hair looks stupid and couldn’t stop staring.’

‘Remmet telli toh.’ Ras cuffed him, but grinned. ‘Your hair looks stupid.’

‘Yeah,’ Kip agreed. No argument there. Had he combed it this morning? He couldn’t remember.

The crowd went back and forth, back and forth. Same faces, same patterns as every other day. ‘What do you wanna do after work?’ Ras asked.

‘Don’t you have history this afternoon?’

„Znáš Amiru v technickém obchodě?“ zaptal se Ras.

„Jo.“

„Asi se jí líbím.“

Kipovi zaskočilo čoko. „Jasně.“

„Fakt,“ prohlásil Ras. „Viděl jsem, jak se na mě divá.“

Kip se rozesmál. „Jasně.“

„Co? Fakticky!“

„Amira. Z technického obchodu.“

„Slyšels dobře."

„Je jí tak pětadvacet nebo kolik.“

„No a?“

„Takže spíš nemohla uvěřit tomu, že by si někdo dobrovolně plácel na hlavu tolik gelu a nemohla na to přestat zírat.“

„Remmet telli toh,“ utnul ho Ras, ale zasmál se. „Tvoje vlasy vypadají hůř.“


Dav se přeléval tam a zpět. Stejný vzor a stejné tváře jako včera nebo kterékoli jiný den. „Co chceš dělat po práci?“ zeptal se Ras.

„Nemáš odpoledne historii?“ Ras zavrtel hlavou s výrazem, který říkal, že histori
Ras shook his head with an expression that said he did have that class lined up, but there was no chance of him being there for it.

‘Wanna go to the hub?’

‘Nah,’ Kip said. There weren’t any new sims out, and they’d played all the ones worth playing. Ras was always down for Battle Wizards, but Kip was kind of sick of it.

‘Wanna go look at the new transport pods?’

‘We did that yesterday.’

‘So? They’re cool.’

Kip shrugged. New pods were the kind of thing that were cool only when you’d never seen them before.

‘Okay,’ Ras said. ‘What do you want to do?’

Kip shrugged again. ‘I dunno.’

Ras took ownership of the choko. ‘You have a bad day or something?’

‘It was fine. M Santoso kind of just let me hang out. Let me have mek during my shift.’

‘That’s cool.’

‘Yeah,’ Kip said, taking the choko back. ‘She’s all right.’

‘I dunno why you’re doing job trials anyway. Exams are coming up.’

This was Ras’ grand plan, unchanged since they were twelve: take the qualification exams and get into university (the fastest

sicem v rozvrhu ale rozhodně se tam nechystá. „Chceš jít do centra?”

„Ani ne,“ řekl Kip. Žádné nové simky nevyšly a všechny, které za to stály, už dávno dohráli. Ras by si vždycky rád zahrál Bojové mágy, ale Kipa už to nudilo.

„Chceš se jít divat na nové transporty?”

„Tam jsme byli včera.“

„No a? Jsou super.“

Kip pokrčil rameny. Nové transportní lodě byly super, ale omrzely se, když je člověk viděl už po desáté.

„Fajn,“ řekl Ras. „Tak co chceš dělat?“

Kip znovu pokrčil rameny. „Nevím.“

Ras mu sebral čoko. „Blbej den nebo co?“

„Ne, v pohodě. M Santoso mě nechala se flákat. Mohl jsem si i při směně dát mok.“

„To je bezva.“

„Jo,“ řekl Kip a vzal si kelímek zpátky. „Je v pohodě.“

„Stejně nechápu, proč chodíš po praxích. Blíží se zkoušky.“

To byl Rasův velký plán už od doby, kdy jim bylo dvanáct. Udělat přijímací zkoušky a dostat se na univerzitu – jinými slovy, vypadnout z Flotily tak rychle, jak je možné. Ve Flotile ho nečekalo nic jiného než lekce obchodu a několik učebních

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ticket out of the Fleet — all there was at home were trade classes and apprenticeships). After that, get a cool job, get on a big ship, and make lots of creds. That was as good of a plan as any for Kip — and more than he’d ever been able to come up with on his own — but he wasn’t as sure as Ras that he’d be able to come along.

‘When I don’t pass, I’m gonna need a job,’ Kip said.

‘You’ll pass,’ Ras said.

‘I suck at tests.’

‘Everyone sucks at tests.’

‘You don’t suck at tests.’

Ras didn’t say anything, because he didn’t suck at tests, just like he wasn’t doing job trials because he knew he wouldn’t need them. When Ras said he was gonna do a thing, the thing happened. Sometimes Kip was jealous of that. He wished he could be more like Ras. Ras always knew what to say, what to do, what was happening. Kip was real glad they were friends, but sometimes he didn’t know what Ras got out of the arrangement.

‘Hey, M Aksoy,’ Ras called out. The grocery seller was walking past them, followed by an autocart carrying …? ‘What is that?’

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‘Hey, M Aksoy,’ Ras called out. The grocery seller was walking past them, followed by an autocart carrying …? ‘What is that?’
M Aksoy turned his head, gestured at the cart to stop, and waved them toward him. ‘Come on and see.’

Kip and Ras ambled over. Among the recognisable boxes – mek powder, root sugar, bottles of kick – there were three plex tanks full of water, like jellyfish tanks. But whatever was inside wasn’t jellyfish, no way. They were long and wispy, covered in soft spines. They shivered their way through the water.

‘Special order from the Archives,’ M Aksoy said.

‘Are they pets or something?’ Ras asked.

‘Some kind of science thing?’

‘Nope,’ M Aksoy said. ‘They’re called—’

‘Pokpok,’ Kip said, saying the word before he realised he knew it.

Ras turned his head. ‘The hell’d you know that?’

Kip had no idea. Something from when he was little? Like something in a learning sim, or a Linking book, or … he couldn’t say. He’d been a dork about that kind of stuff as a kid, and it had been a long time since that was his thing. But wherever pokpok had come from, the dusty old memory remained active. He could feel Ras looking at him, though, so he just shrugged and didn’t say anything about the bit where he was pretty sure the swimming things were Harmagian a kořenového cukru a lahvemi kopu ležely tři plexové nádoby plné vody, podobné nádržím na medúzy. Ale to, co plavalo uvnitř, rozhodně nebyly medúzy. Tyhle věci bylo dlouhé a tenké, pokryté měkkými ostny. Třaslavým pohyblem se pohybovaly po nádržích.

„Speciální objednávka z Archivů,“ vysvětlil P Aksoy.

„To mají být jako mazlíčci?“ zeptal se Ras. „Nebo něco na výzkum?“

„Ne,“ řekl P Aksoy. „Jmenuji se-“

„Pokpok,“ vyhrkl Kip dříve, než si vůbec uvědomil, že to vi.

Ras se na něj překvapeně otočil. „Jak to sakra víš?“


„Máš pravdu, pokpok,“ potvrdil P Aksoy.

„Za P Itoh má přijet host, harmagian.“
food. Ras was real smart, and Kip didn’t want to look stupid by saying something wrong.

‘You’re right, pokpok,’ M Aksoy said. ‘M Itoh has a Harmagian guest arriving today. These, apparently, are one of their favourite things to eat.’

Kip watched the pokpok wriggle around the tank, looking like spiky snot brought to life. He felt his nose pull into itself.

Ras mirrored his expression. ‘Do they fry them or—’

The grocer’s eyes crinkled at the edges. ‘You know, I don’t know if they cook them at all.’

Kip groaned with disgust. Ras looked at him. ‘Give you twenty creds if you eat one.’

‘You don’t have twenty creds.’

The grocer laughed. ‘One of these’d cost you well more than twenty creds, and they’re not for you anyway. But here.’ He reached into one of the crates on the cart, and pulled out two snack bags. ‘Free sample, all the way from the independent colonies.’

Kip accepted the bag and looked at the label. The One and Only Fire Shrimp, it read in Klip. There was another line that ended in the word hot, but the word before it he didn’t know. He pointed it out to Ras. They both used Klip all the time, but Ras was super good at it – real Klip, classroom Klip, not just a few words stuck into Ensk like everybody

A tahle zvířátka jsou podle všeho jejich oblíbená pochoutka.“

Kip pozoroval, jak se pokpokové zmitají v nádobách. Vypadali jako oživlé hleny s ostny. Když si něco takového představil na svém talíři, znechuceně nakrčil nos.

Ras se zatvářil podobně. „To je smaží, nebo-“

Prodavač zamrkal. „Víte, vlastně si nejsem jistý, jestli je vůbec nějak upravují.“

„Fuj,“ prohlásil Kip. Ras se na něj podíval. „Dám ti dvacet kredů, když jednoho sníš.“

„Nemáš dvacet kredů.“

Prodavač se zasmál. „Jedna tahle věc stojí mnohem více než dvacet kredů a kromě toho, stejně nejsou pro vás. Ale tady máte.“ Sáhl do jedné z krabic a vytáhl dva balíčky pochutin. „Vzorek zdarma, až z nezávislých kolonií.“


Mluvili spolu klipsky v jednom kuse a Ras byl vážně dobrý – i v reálné klipštině, ne že by jen používal slova, která byla převzata do anštiny (jako to dělal každý, komu nebylo sto let). Ras se rozhodně dostane na univerzitu.
did (everybody who wasn’t old, anyway).

Ras was definitely going to university.

‘Soolat,’ Ras read. ‘That’s like, uh … horribly.’

‘Devastatingly,’ M Aksoy said. ‘That’s a better translation. Devastatingly hot.

I don’t know if they’re any good, but if you like them, you know where to trade for more.’ ‘Thanks, M,’ Ras said.

‘Yeah, thanks, M,’ said Kip.

The grocer gave them a nod and started back on his way. ‘Hey, M,’ Ras called after him. ‘You said the Harmagian’s gonna be at the Archives?’

‘Far as I know,’ M Aksoy called back as he disappeared into the crowd.

Ras looked at Kip. ‘Ever seen a Harmagian before?’

Kip shook his head. ‘Just in sims.’

‘When you gotta be back at work?’

Kip shrugged. M Santoso hadn’t given him a specific time that he needed to be back, and given their conversation that morning, he didn’t think she’d care too much if he was gone a while.

‘Well, then, let’s go.’ Ras headed for the elevator to the transport deck.

Kip followed. Going all the way to the Archives just to look at an alien seemed like

„Soolat,“ přečetl Ras. „To je jako, hm… děsně.“

„Nesmírně,“ řekl P Aksoy. „To je lepší překlad. Nesmírně pálivé. Nevím, jestli je to dobré, ale jestli ano, víte, kde koupit další.“

„Díky, P,“ řekl Ras.

„Jo, díky, P,“ řekl Kip.

Prodavač jim pokývl na pozdrav a pokračoval v chůzi. „Jo, P?“ zavolal za ním ještě Ras. „Říkal jste, že v Archivech bude nějaké harmagian?“

„Pokud vím,“ zavolal prodavač zpět a zmizel v davu.

Ras se podíval na Kipa. „Už jsi někdy viděl harmagiana?“

Kip zavrtěl hlavou. „Jenom v simkách.“

„Kdy musíš zpátky do práce?“

Kip pokrčil rameny. P Santoso mu přesný čas neřekla a podle konverzace, kterou vedli ráně, to nevypadalo, že by ji vadilo, když se trochu zpozdí.

„No tak jdeme.“ Ras vyrazil k výtahu na transportní palubě. Kip ho následoval. Jít do Archivů podívat se na mimozemšťana se zdálo jako hloupost, ale když se nad tím zamyslel, skoro všechno vypadalo jako hloupost. A tohle byla alespoň hloupost, která se nastává každý den. Povzdechl si. Ras si toho všiml. „Jo, já vím, kámo.“
a stupid thing to do, but then, everything seemed like a stupid thing to do, and at least this stupid thing was a stupid thing that didn’t happen every stupid day. He sighed.

Ras noticed. ‘Yeah, I know, man.’ He shook his head as they weaved through the crowd. ‘The Fleet sucks.’

ISABEL

Aliens did not make Isabel uncomfortable. In her youth – a period of her life she was sure her grandkids didn’t truly believe had taken place – she’d spent three standards hopping tunnels, crashing in spaceport hostels, gobbling up every strange sky and unknown city until homesickness finally won the day. She’d bunked with a Laru for one leg of a trip, become the drinking buddy of a quartet of Aandrisks on another. That was a long time ago, to be sure, but she’d had contact with aliens since – merchants, mostly, when she ordered something special for import. But in recent years, she’d found herself in the odd, delightful position of being a person of interest to certain individuals from the Reskit Institute of Interstellar Migration. The Exodus Fleet had drifted back into academic fashion, and, as the head archivist of the Asteria, Isabel did not have to ask why they’d sought her out. Every homesteader had its Archives and archivists, but Isabel was the

Zavřel hlavu a pokračoval v prodírání se davem. „Flotila je naprd.“

ISABELA

V blízkosti mimozemšťanů se Isabela necitila nesvá. Když byla mladá (a většina jejich pravnoučat jistě nevěřila, že taková doba existovala), strávila tři roky cestováním tunely, přespáváním v hotelích ve vesmírných přístavech a s nadšením hltala vše neznámé a cizí, dokud se ji konečně nezačalo stýskat.

Na jednom ze svých výletů sdílela pokoj s laru, na dalším chodila po hospodách se čtveřicí aandrisků. Jistě, už to bylo dávno, ale i od té doby bývala v kontaktu s mimozemšťany – většinou s obchodníky, když si objednala nějaké speciální zboží. Ale v posledních letech se dostala do zvláštní pozice, kdy se o ni začalo zajímat několik lidí z Reskitského institutu mezihvězdné migrace. Flotila Exodus se dostala zpět do středu akademického zájmu a Isabela jako hlavní představitelka Asterijských archivů byla první osoba, kterou kontaktovali. Každý osadník měl
current oldest of her profession, and even among aliens, that counted for something.

She was biased, of course, having worked in the Archives for most of her adult life, but the files she kept watch over were nothing short of magic. The first Exodans had crammed old-timey server racks full to bursting with records of Earth and personal stories, and every generation since had added to their work. What is it you’re looking for? she asked anyone who made the trip to the spiralling chamber of data nodes (the server racks had been retired well before her time).


Her life spent in service to the past was why she now found herself doing a rather-out-of-the-ordinary task, something other than helping students or doing node maintenance or conducting record ceremonies. Today, she was meeting with an alien, and as transgalactic as her correspondence was, it had been a long time since she’d shared a room with one.

Ghuh’loloan had come straight from the shuttledocks to the Archives, and given what Isabel knew of her, she doubted she’d checked into her guest quarters yet. The Harmagian was the most enthusiastic of Isabel’s Reskit Institute pen pals, and they’d

svůj archiv, ale Isabela byla mezi jejich představenými nejstarší. A to něco znamenalo i v očích mimozemšťanů.

Byla předpojatá, samozřejmě, v Archivích pracovala celý svůj život, ale složky, o které se starala, pro ni byly jako kouzla. První exodané naplnili starodávné police záznamy ze Země a svými příběhy a každá generace po nich přidala ty své. „Co hledáte?“ ptala se každého, kdo do spirálovité komnaty plné složek a dat vstoupil (police už byly pryč dlouho předtím, než zde začala pracovat).

Umění? Literatura? Rodinná historie?

Pozemská historie? Pozemský život? Ať jste hledali cokoli, pokud to lidem stálo za uchování, mohli jste to najít právě v Archivích.

Právě její dlouholetá práce v Archivích byl důvod, proč jí její nejnovější úkol příšel přinejmenším neobvyklý. Celá léta se zabývala minulostí, radila studentům, udržovala servery v činnosti, nebo pořádala slavnosti s promítáním. Dnes se ale měla setkat s mimozemšťanem a nehledě na to, jak dlouho už mezi nimi probíhala živá korespondence, už to bylo hodně dávno, co s nějakým stála v jedné místnosti.

Ghuh’loloan přišla z doku přímo do Archivů a podle toho, co o ní Isabela věděla, pochybovala, že už se alespoň zaregistrovala do svého pronajatého pokoje. Harmagianka byla jedním z jejích
been friendly colleagues for years. But this was their first time meeting in person, and, as was to be expected, Isabel found herself reconciling the person she knew from letters with the person now sitting before her. The dog-sized, speckled-yellow, wet-skinned person, lying legless on a motorised cart, with no feet and no bones and no real shape at all until you got to the wreath of grasping tentacles and smaller tendrils centred around a toothless maw, crowned with a pair of retracting eyestalks that made Isabel stare despite her best efforts.

Stars, it really had been a long time.

‘I’m sorry I couldn’t meet you at the dock,’ Isabel said. ‘Today’s ceremony took a long time to clear out.’ They were in her office now, at her meeting table, away from the towering technology and busy staff. Well, ostensibly busy. Isabel had seen more than a few of her peers undertaking tasks of dubious value that steered them conveniently past her office windows. Everyone wanted a glimpse of the visitor.

Ghuh’loloan flexed her facial dactyli. Isabel knew Harmagian facial gestures were important communicative cues, but they were lost on her. She could follow only her colleague’s words, which dripped with a deliciously-burred accent. ‘Nonsense,’ Ghuh’loloan said. ‘You have work, and I am the one disrupting it! I feel nothing but joy in nejnadšenějších korespondentů a už roky mezi sebou udržovaly přátelský vztah na dálku. Dnes měly první příležitost setkat se osobně a Isabel bez překvapení zjistila, že se snaží porovnávat osobu sedící před ní s osobou, kterou znala prostřednictvím dopisů. Přesněji, osobu o velikosti psa, posetou žlutými tečkami a se slizskou kůží, která kvůli absenci nohou musela ležet na motorizovaném vozíku, neměla chodidla, kosti, a vlastně ani tvar, pokud jste nepočítali věnec větších i menších chapadel, který obklopoval bezzubý chřtán. Vše korunoval pár stopek s očními bulvami, od kterých Isabela nedokázala odtrhnout oči, ať se snažila, jak chtěla.

U hvězd, už to bylo opravdu dávno.

„Mrzí mě, že jsem se s tebou nemohla setkat už v doku,“ řekla Isabela. „Dnešní obřad se protáhl.“ Byly v její kanceláři, u jejího pracovního stolu, daleko od strojů a zaneprážděných zaměstnanců. Nebo alespoň zaměstnanců, kteří zaneprážděně vypadali. Isabela si všimla několika lidí, kteří se dnes rozhodli věnovat úkolům pochybné hodnoty, jen když to znamenalo, že je zavedou co nejbližší k oknu její kanceláře. Všichni byli zvědaví na návštěvnici.

Ghuh’loloan zatnula mimické svaly. Isabela věděla, že taková gesta jsou velmi důležitou součástí harmagianské komunikace, ale ona
sharing your company, for however much
time you can spare.’

Harmagians, Isabel knew, had a tendency to lay it on thick. ‘I’m looking forward to
working together as well. Was your journey all right?’

‘Yes, yes, entirely adequate. I’ve had better,
but then, I’ve had plenty worse.’ Ghuh’loloan
laughed with a wavering coo. Her eyestalks studied something. ‘Do you have trouble understanding me?’

‘No, not at all.’

‘But then—’ Ghuh’loloan pointed a tentacle toward Isabel’s face.

It took Isabel a moment to understand. ‘Oh,’ she chuckled, removing her hud. A faint border disappeared from her field of vision, an edge she barely noticed until it was gone. ‘Sorry, I’m so used to having it on I often forget to take it off. I’ve even worn it to sleep, once or twice.’

‘Ah,’ Ghuh’loloan said. ‘For filing, then, not translating?’

‘For everything, really,’ Isabel said, looking at the clear lens set in a wellworn frame. ‘It’s much faster than my scrib, and it keeps my hands free.’

‘I wouldn’t know,’ Ghuh’loloan said in a good-humoured tone. She pointed at her
delicate, swaying eyes, incapable of wearing Isabel’s favoured gadget.

‘But it sounds very useful.’

Isabel smiled. ‘Well, I envy that a bit,’ she said, nodding at Ghuh’loloan’s cart. ‘My knees aren’t what they used to be.’

‘I wouldn’t know about knees, either.’

They both laughed. ‘Would you like something to drink?’ Isabel asked.

‘Mek, if you have it.’

Isabel knew that she did, as the other archivists hadn’t rioted. ‘You take it cold, I assume?’ She’d learned to do a Harmagian-style flash cold brew in the tenday before her colleague arrived.

But Isabel’s new skill was to be untested. ‘I do,’ Ghuh’loloan said, ‘but if I wanted cold mek, I would’ve stayed home. Please, make it for me as you’d make it for yourself.’ She paused. ‘Although, perhaps not too hot.’

Isabel nodded with understanding as she opened the tin of mek powder. Introducing scalding hot liquid to mollusk-like skin would not end well. She glanced over and laughed, seeing that Ghuh’loloan had opened a storage compartment on her cart and removed both scrib and stylus. ‘Are we getting started?’

Ghuh’loloan curled the tentacles around her mouth. ‘I had questions before I arrived, but „Ah,” řekla Ghuh’loloan. „Takže na práci, ne na překlad?”

„Vlastně na všechno,“ řekla Isabela s pohledem upřeným na čočku v obnošeném rámečku. „Je to rychlejší než skrib a nechává mi to volné ruce.“

„Mně by to nepomohlo,“ prohlásila Ghuh’loloan veselým tónem. Ukázala na svá křehká, houpající se očka na stopkách, pro které by byl Isabelin displej naprosto nepoužitelný.

„Ale zní to užitečně.“

Isabel se usmála. „No, já ti trochu závidím tohle,“ ukázala na Ghuh’loloanin vozík. „Moje kolena už nejsou, co bývaly.“

„O kolenou toho také moc nevím.“

Obě se zasmály. „Dáš si něco k pití?“ zeptala se Isabela.

„Mok, jestli máte.“

Isabela si byla jistá, že mají, jinak by mezi jejimi kolegy už dávno vypuklo povstání. „Dáváš si ho studený, že?“ Desetíden před Ghuh’loloaniným příjezdem se naučila připravovat mok za studena po harmagiánském způsobu.

Ale jak kvalitní její příprava byla se nedozvěděla. „Ano,“ řekla Ghuh’loloan. „Ale kdybych chtěla studený mok, mohla jsem zůstat doma. Prosím udělej mi ho tak, jak by sis ho udělala pro sebe.“
after seeing these wonderful ships of yours
with my own eyes – oh, I hardly know where
to start! Everything. I want to know
everything. Let’s begin with the ships. I saw
so many things on my way here that I wish to
understand better.’

‘You’ll have to tell me what you already
know about them, so I don’t walk the same
corridors twice.’

‘No. My understanding may be flawed, and if
I assume that I already know something, you
won’t know to correct my mistakes. Besides,
it is such a rare opportunity to get
information that is not filtered through
a screen. Tell me of the ships as if I know
nothing of them. Tell me as if I were a child.’

‘All right then.’ Isabel gathered her thoughts
as the mek brewer rumbled. ‘The original
architects based everything around three
basic principles:
longevity, stability, and well-being. They
knew that for the Fleet to have any chance of
survival, the ships had to be something that
could withstand both distance and time,
something that the spacers within could
always rely on, and something that would
foster both physical and mental health.
Survival alone wasn’t enough. Couldn’t be
enough. If there were disputes over food,
resources, living space—’

‘That’d be the end of it.’
‘That’d be the end of it. These had to be places Humans would want to live in. In that long stretch between leaving Earth and GC contact, we were utterly alone. Those who lived and died during that time only knew planets from stories. This’ – she gestured at the walls – ‘was everything. It had to feel like a home, rather than a prison. Otherwise, we were doomed.’

‘Longevity, stability, well-being,’ Ghuh’loloan repeated, writing on her scrib in her strange boxy alphabet. ‘Please, go on.’

Isabel put her own scrib on the table between them and launched a sketch programme. Floating pixels followed her stylus as she drew in the air. ‘Architecturally, every homesteader is the same. At the centre, you have the main cylinder, which is essentially life support storage. It houses the water tanks, the air tanks, and the batteries.’

‘Now, the batteries,’ Ghuh’loloan said, still taking notes. ‘Those store kinetically harvested energy, yes?’

‘Originally, yes, mostly. Well … right, let me back up. When the Exodans first left Earth, they burned chemical fuels to get going, just to tide them over until enough kinetic energy had been generated through the floors. They also had hydro-generators.’

‘Water-powered?’

‘Schopné uletět ohromné vzdálenosti. Musely to být lodě, na které se vesmířané budou moci za všec okolností spolehnout a také musely být stavěny tak, aby dokázaly udržet fyzické i psychické zdraví všech na palubě. Jenom přežít nestačilo. Nemohlo stačit. Kdyby vypukly boje o jídlo, zásoby, prostor…“

„To by byl konec.“

„To by byl konec. Lodě musely být místem, kde by lidé doopravdy chtěli žít. Na té dlouhé cestě mezi Zemí a setkáním s GS jsme byli naprosto sami. Ti, kteří se v té době na lodi narodili a zemřeli, znali planety jen z příběhů. Tohle,“ obsáhla rukama prostor okolo sebe. „Tohle bylo všechno. Musel to být domov, ne vězení. Kdyby to tak nebylo, byli bychom ztraceni.“

„Výdrž, stabilita, pohodlí,“ zopakovala Ghuh’loloan a načmárala na svůj skrib několik poznámek zvláštním hranatým písmem. „Prosím pokračuj.“

Isabela položila svůj skrib na stůl před sebe a spustila program malování. Poletující pixely následovaly tahy jejího pera a ona začala kreslit do vzduchu.

„Architektonicky je každý osadník stejný. Ve středu je hlavní válec, kde se nacházejí systémy podpory života. Jsou tam nádrže s vodou, vzduchem a také baterie.“
‘Yes, using waste water.’ The brewer dinged, and Isabel filled two mugs. ‘As it flows back to the processing facilities, it runs through a series of generators. That system’s still in use. It’s not our primary power source, but it’s a good supplement.’ She placed the mugs between them, and considered bringing out the tin of cookies stashed away in her desk. She decided against it. Harmagians had famously finicky stomachs, and she didn’t want to hospitalise her colleague over ginger bites.

Ghuh’loloan reached for the mug closest to her, eying the tiny wisps of steam. She gave the surface of the drink a few tentative raps with the tip of her tentacle – one, two, three. Apparently finding the temperature suitable, she wrapped a portion of her limb around the handle and brought the mug aloft. ‘See, this is why I wanted to start with the basics. How fascinating. Might we be able to visit the water generators?’

‘Absolutely,’ Isabel said. Not a place she would’ve been excited to visit on her own, but Ghuh’loloan’s enthusiasm was catching. ‘Wonderful. But I’m getting you off-track. Do I correctly glean that kinetic energy is no longer your primary power source?’

‘That’s right. Once the GC gave us this sun, we started collecting solar power.’

„A ty baterie,“ řekla Ghuh’loloan a stále si psala poznámky. „Ty skladují shromážděnou kinetickou energii, že?“

„Původně ano, většinou ano. Ale… No, dostanu se k tomu. Když Exodané opustili Zemi, spalovali chemické palivo, aby zrychlovali, dokud nebyl vygenerován dostatek kinetické energie. Také měli hydrogenerátory.“

„Vodní pohon?“

„Ano, používali odpadní vodu.“ Vařič zacinkal a Isabela naplnila dva hrnky. „Když se odpadní voda vrací do čističek, protéká sérií generátorů. Ten systém se stále používá. Není to nás hlavní zdroj energie, ale je to dobrý doplněk.“ Postavila hrnky mezi sebe a svou kolegyni a chvíli zvažovala, jestli nemá vytáhnout plechovku sušenek, kterou schovávala ve stole. Nakonec nápad zavrhla, harmagianí měli citlivé žaludky a ona nechtěla dostat Ghuh’loloan do nemocnice kvůli kousku zázvoru. Ghuh’loloan se natáhla po hrnku, který měla blíž. Obezřetně pozorovala páru, která z nápoje stoupla a než ho uchopila, několikrát vyzkoušela jeho teplotu špičkou chapadla. Jeden krátký dotyk, druhý, třetí. Očividně byla s výsledkem spokojená, a nakonec okolo hrnku obtočila celé chapadlo a přísunula si ho bliž. „Vidiš, to je přesně důvod, proč jsem chtěla začít od
‘Yes, I saw the satellites as I flew in. Those were provided by …?’

‘The Aeluons.’ Isabel’s tone was matter-of-fact, but she felt a slump in pride. Her colleague had assumed correctly that the Exodans couldn’t have built such tech on their own.

Lacking lips, Ghuh’loloan held the Human-style mug up, flattened her face back into her body so that it lay almost horizontally, and poured a little waterfall into her wide mouth. Her whole body shivered. ‘Ho! Oh ho!’ ‘Too hot?’ Isabel asked with dread.

‘No— no, I’m just unaccustomed. What a feeling!’ She executed a longer pour. ‘Ho! That’s … stars, that’s thrilling. I may never take mek cold again.’ She shivered once more, then cradled her mug between two tentacles. ‘Oh dear, where was I?’

‘Satellites.’

‘Yes, and Aeluons. They provided you with artigrav, too, yes?’

‘That’s right.’

‘A generous people,’ Ghuh’loloan said.

‘I wish I could say the same of mine.’ She laughed. ‘I suppose it is in your best interest that we did not win their war against us, eh?’

Isabel chuckled, but took that as a sign to steer the conversation back to the topic at začátku. Jak fascinující! Můžeme navštívit ty vodní generátory?“

„Rozhodně,“ prohlásila Isabela. Nebylo to zrovna místo, kam by se sama vydala, ale Ghuh’loloanino nadšení bylo nakažlivé.

„Skvělé. Ale přerušila jsem tě. Chápu tedy správně, že kinetická energie už není vaším hlavním zdrojem energie?“

„To je pravda. Když nám GS přidělila tohle slunce, začali jsme shromažďovat solární energii.“

„Ano, viděla jsem satelity, když jsme příleteli. Ty jste dostali…?“

„Od aeluonů.“ Isabelin tón zůstával čistě faktický, ale její sebevědomí pokleslo. Její kolegyně správně uhádla, že takovou technologii nemohli Exodané postavit sami.

Protože neměla rty, Ghuh’loloan se zaklonila tak, že její pusa ležela v podstatě vodorovně a nalila si část obsahu hrnku přímo dovnitř. Její celé tělo se zatřáslo.

„Ho! Oh ho!“ „Moc horké?“ zeptala se Isabela s hrůzou.

„Ne – ne, jen nejsem zvyklá. To je pocit!“ Napila se znovu. „Ho! To je… U hvězd, to je úžasné. Asi už si nikdy nedám studený mok.“ Ještě jednou se oklepala a sevřela hrnek do dvou chapadel. „Páni, kde jsem skončila?“

„U satelitů.“
hand. The war invoked was very old, very ugly history. Clearly, Ghuh’loloan didn’t mind a bit of self-deprecation, but Isabel didn’t want to cross the line from cultural ribbing into insult. ‘Indeed. So, the main cylinder.’

‘The main cylinder.’

‘Unlike the habitat ring – which I’ll get to – the cylinder interior was never designed for gravity, so you won’t find artigrav nets there. Everything is arranged in a circle, around a central core.’

Ghuh’loloan set down her cup. ‘Do you mean that when you go in there—’

‘We have to work in zero-g, yes.’

‘Incredible! I had no idea there were still species doing that. Not within the hull, at least!’

‘Tamsin worked there, until some years back,’ Isabel said, knowing her colleague knew her wife’s name even though they hadn’t properly met yet. ‘I’m sure she’d be happy to talk to you about it.’

‘Oh! Yes. Yes, that would be marvellous.’ Ghuh’loloan scribbled furiously. ‘Please, please, go on.’

‘At the aft end of the cylinder – as much as anything can be aft in space – we have the engines. They’re … they’re engines.’ She shrugged and laughed.

„Ano, a aeluoni. Od nich máte také umělograv, že?“

„Ano.“

„Štědří lidé,“ prohlásila Ghuh’loloan. „Přála bych si říct to samé o těch mých.“

Zasmála se. „Asi jste rádi, že jsme nevyhráli válku, kterou proti nám vedli, co?“

Isabela se usmála, ale vzala to jako signál, že se má vrátit k původním tématu. Válka, o které Ghuh’loloan mluvila, byla velmi starou a ošklivou historií. Zřejmě ji nevdalo být sebekritická vůči vlastní rase, ale Isabela nechtěla překročit tu velmi tenkou hranici mezi nevinným žertem a urážkou. „Jistě. Takže ten hlavní válec.“

„Hlavní válec.“

„Na rozdíl od obytného prstence – ke kterému se dostanu – válec nikdy nebyl navržen na to, aby v něm fungovala gravitace, takže tam nenajdeš žádné umělogravitační sítě. Vše je uspořádáno v kruhu okolo jádra.“

Ghuh’loloan odložila hrnek na stůl. „Cheš říct, že když tam někdo jde.“

„Musí pracovat ve stavu beztíže, ano.“

„Neuvěřitelné! Netušila jsem, že to ještě nějaký druh dělá. Alespoň ne v lodi.“

„Tamsin tam ještě před několika lety pracovala,“ řekla Isabela, protože věděla, že
‘Not my area of expertise.’

‘And they don’t get much use anymore.’

‘We use them to correct orbital issues, but no, nothing like they did back in our wandering days. Now, the ring – that I can talk on for days.’ She directed the pixels into shapes she walked through every day. ‘Six hexagons, each joined to another around the main cylinder.’

‘And this used to spin, before artigrav.’

‘Right. It was a big centrifuge.’

‘Was that not unpleasant?’

Isabel shrugged. ‘I don’t know. I’ve only ever lived in artigrav. I’m sure there’s an account of how centrifugal gravity felt.’ She made a mental note to go searching for that.

Ghuh’łoloan made a note as well, on her scrib. ‘So, six hexagons comprise the ring.’

‘Six hexagons. And within those, you find more hexagons. Let’s start small and work our way up.’ She thought for a moment. ‘Ah, I have just the thing.’ She accessed an animated image file intended for young kids. A lone hexagon appeared. ‘Okay, so we start with a single room. A bedroom, let’s say.’ She gestured. The hexagon shrunk, and was joined by six others, creating a mathematical flower. ‘Six rooms, surrounding a seventh room. This is a home.’ The geometry expanded again. ‘Now you have six homes,
surrounding a common area. We call this, predictably, a hex. You’ll hear this term a lot. Somebody’s hex is their primary address.’

Another expansion. ‘Six hexes surround a hub. This forms a neighbourhood.’

‘And in a hub, you will find …?’

‘Everyday services. Grocery stands, a medical clinic, tech swaps, cafes, playgrounds, that kind of thing.’ She gestured again. ‘All right, here’s where it starts to get big. Six neighbourhoods to a district. The space in the centre is the plaza. The amenities here vary from district to district, but in general, this is where you find your big stuff: schools, recycling centres, entertainment, long-term medical facilities, council offices, marketplaces, big gardens.’

‘We are in a plaza now, yes?’

‘Yes. And from there …’ The image blossomed into one final shape – six triangles comprised of six districts each, arranged around a final colossal hexagon. ‘So, all of this’ – she circled it with her hands – ‘is a deck.’ The middle area is the nucleus. That’s where you get farms and manufacturing. At the centre of everything is, well, the Centre.’

‘Where you dispose of your dead.’

‘I …’ Isabel chose her words carefully, knowing her colleague hadn’t meant any
offence. ‘I’m not sure we’d use the word “dispose”, but yes.’

‘And then above and below the residential deck, you have …?’

‘Directly above, the transport deck, where you can hop from district to district in a pod. Below, waste processing. And below that, observation.’

‘Yes, I’m very excited to see your viewing cupolas. I don’t know of any other ship architecture quite like that. Most have windows on walls, not the floor.’

‘That goes right back to the need to prevent fighting over living space. If some people have rooms with a view and others don’t, you’re going to have problems. And if centrifugal gravity is pulling our feet toward the stars, then you can’t have windows on most walls. The only people who could would be the ones with homes on the edges of each deck, and that … well, that would invite trouble.’

‘Ahhhhh. Yes, I see. I see.’ Ghuh’loloan’s eyestalks traced over her notes. ‘Six homes to a hex, six hexes to a neighbourhood, six neighbourhoods to a district, thirty-six districts to a deck, four decks to a …?’

‘Segment.’

‘A segment. And six segments to a homesteader.’

„Teď jsme na náměstí, že?”

„Ano. A odtamtud…” Obraz se zformoval do finálního tvaru – šest trojúhelníků, každý složený ze šesti okresů obklopujících ohromný šestiúhelník uprostřed. „A tohle všechno,“ obkroužila projekci rukou, „to je paluba. Prostřední část je nukleus. Tam jsou farmy a výroby. V centru všeho je… no, Centrum.“

„Tam se zbavujete svých mrtvých.“

„Já…“ Isabela opatrně volila slova, protože věděla, že její kolegyně nic nemyslela špatně. „Nejsem si jistá, jestli bych použila právě slovo ,zbavovat se,‘ ale ano.“

„A nad a pod obytnou oblasti je…?“

„Přímo nad námi je transportní paluba, kde můžeš cestovat z okresu do okresu pomocí modulů. Pod námi je zpracování odpadů, a pod tím vyhlídky.“

„Ano, nemůžu se dočkat, až uvidím vaše vyhlídkové kupole. Nevím o tom, že by něco podobného měla jiná loď. Většina lodí má okna na zdech, ne na podlaze.“

„To je zase kvlí udržení klidu mezi lidmi. Kdyby někdo dostal místnost s výhledem a jiný ne, přinášelo to by s sebou mnoho problémů. A protože gravitace vytvořená rotací způsobila, že jsme chodili po zdech směřujících k jádru, nebylo možné dát okna do většiny místností. Jen do těch, které byly
‘You’ve got it.’

The Harmagian studied the children’s images again. ‘It’s rather beautiful, in a way. Nothing wasted, nothing frivolous. Simple exponents.’

Isabel smiled. ‘It’s like a … oh dear, I only know the word in Ensk.’ She shifted linguistic gears. ‘Honeycomb.’

Ghuh’loloan flicked her mouth tendrils. ‘I don’t know that word. My Ensk is poor enough that I’d call it non-existent.’

Isabel gestured at her scrib and accessed another image file. ‘Honeycomb. It’s a structure made of interlocking hexagons. Incredibly strong and space efficient.’

‘Ahhhh. I’ve seen configurations like this, but I don’t know that there is an easy word for them in Klip. Or Hanto, for that matter. Honeycomb.’ She stretched her face forward toward the image. ‘Wait, is this … organic? What is this?’

‘A relic from Earth. A communal insect species built nests with walls of this shape out of … spit, I think. I don’t know off-hand.’

‘How strange. Well, I am looking forward to seeing your own honeycomb nest.’ Her tendrils changed, taking on a slight slackness. ‘Will my presence be intrusive for the families there? I am not overly familiar with your … umístěny na okraji paluby a to… no, to by jen vyvolávalo hádky.“

„Ahaaa. Ano, chápu, chápu.“

Ghuh’loloaniny oči přelétly text, který si naškrábala do skribu. „Šest domovů tvoří hex, šest hexů sousedství, šest sousedství okres, třicet šest okresů palubu a čtyři paluby?“

„Segment.“

„Segment. A šest segmentů tvoří osadníka.“

„Přesně tak.“

Harmagianka si znovu prohlédla animace. „Je to svým způsobem docela krásné. Nic nazbyt, žádné výstřelky. Jednoduchost.“

Isabela se usmála. „Je to jako… ach bože, znám to slovo jen v anštině.“ Přepnula v hlavě jazyky. „Plástev.“

Ghuh’loloan zatřásla chapadly. „To slovo neznám. Moje anština je tak špatná, že se ani nedá říct, že z ní něco umím.“

Isabela udělala několik gest na skribu a objevil se další obrázek. „Plástev. Je to struktura vytvořená z pospojovaných šestiúhelníků. Neuvěřitelně pevná a šetří místem.“

„Aha! Takové uspořádání už jsem viděla, ale nevím, jestli pro něj existuje jednoduché slovo v klipštině. Nebo hantšině. Plástev.“
Human social custom when it comes to the home.‘

‘They know you’re coming, so it won’t be any trouble. In fact, I was hoping you’d join me for a meal at my home tonight. I had originally thought of taking you to a restaurant, but—’

‘Bah, restaurants! At some point, yes, I would enjoy that, but on my first day here, I would much rather be your guest than someone else’s.’

Isabel took serious note of that term – guest. She’d done research on that front before Ghuh’loloan’s arrival, spurred by a slight shift in her colleague’s letters. Once arrangements for the visit to the Fleet had been made, Isabel found herself no longer being addressed as dear associate but dear host, and Ghuh’loloan’s phrasing had become deferential. This was an important thing, Isabel had learned, as was the entire concept of hosts and guests in Harmagian culture. By anybody’s definition, hosts were expected to be accommodating and guests to be gracious, but Harmagians put considerable stock into everyone performing those roles well. A bad host would be shunned – or, as the rules extended to merchants as well, bankrupt – and a bad guest was on par with a petty thief (which made an odd sense, Isabel decided: guests did eat your food and take your time). There were entire books written on host/guest relations. Přitáhla se blíž k obrazu. „Moment, je tohle… organické? Co to je?”

„Pozůstatek ze Země. Jeden ze druhů společenského hmyzu stavěl hnízda tohoto uspořádání. Zdi jsou vytvořené z jejich… slin, aspoň mysliš. Nevim to z hlavy.“

„Jak zvláštní. No, rozhodně se těším, až uvidím vaši pláť." Její chapadla trochu ochabla. „Bude moje přítomnost rušivá pro rodiny, které zde žijí? Nejsem úplně obeznámena s lidskými zvyky, když přijde na chování v jejich domovech.“

„Vědí, že jsi tu, tak by to neměl být problém. Vlastně jsem doufala, že se k nám připojíš dnes na večeři, u mě doma. Původně jsem myslela, že tě vezmu do restaurace, ale—“

„Ah, restaurace! Později ano, jistě, ráda nějakou navštivím, ale jsem tu první den a byla bych mnohem radši, kdybych dnes mohla být tvým hostem.“

Isabela při slově ‚host‘ zpozorněla. Před Ghuh’loloaniným příjezdem si toto téma pečlivě nastudovala, poté, co si povšimla jisté změny v tónu jejich vzájemných dopisů. Poté, co si sjednaly detaily návštěvy, začínaly Ghuh’loloaniny dopisy oslovením ‚drahá hostitelko,‘ místo ‚drahá kolegyně,‘ a její dopisy byly často formulovány velmi uctivě. Isabella zjistila, že celý koncept hostů a hostitelů je
etiquette, the most seminal of which – Rules for Guests of Good Lineage – had been the go-to for over a hundred standards. Isabel had skimmed a few opening paragraphs and left the rest of the tedious tome unread. Using her own alienness as a social buffer, she figured her Good Host status was assured by providing a non-poisonous meal on clean plates in friendly company.

She hoped so, anyway.

_v harmagianské kultuře velmi důležitý. Obechně platilo, že hostitelé měli být vstřícní a hosté vlídní, ale bylo velmi důležité, jak dobře každý svou roli vykonával. Špatným hostitelům se lidé vyhýbali, a protože se stejná pravidla vztahovala i na obchodníky, snadno se mohlo stát, že kvůli špatnému vykonávání své role hostitele někdo zbankrotoval. Špatní hosté byli stavěni na stejnou příčkou jako zlodějíčci a kapsáři (což Isabele dávalo jakýmsi způsobem smysl, hosté jedli hostitelovo jídlo a okrádali ho o čas). Bylo napsáno nespočetně knih o etiketě mezi hostem a hostitelem, a některé z nich existovaly už stastandardy. Isabela si pročetla několik úvodních odstavců a pak nudný tlustospis odložila. Řekla si, že vzhledem k jejímu cizímu původu snad k zajištění statusu dobrého hostitele bude stačit, když harmagiance podá jídlo bez jedu na čistém talíři a večerí doprovodí přijemnou konverzací.

Alespoň v to doufala.

KIP
Feed source: The Thread – The Official News Source of the Exodan Fleet (Public/Klip)
Item name/date: Evening News Summary - Galactic - 130/306
Encryption: 0
Hello, and welcome to our evening update. I’m Quinn Stephens. We begin tonight’s headline summary with news from the Fleet. The investigation into the body discovered aboard the Asteria last tenday is still unfolding. Five suspects have been apprehended and detained in connection with the untimely death of Sawyer Gursky, a Central space immigrant who recently took up residency in the Fleet. The crew of the Silver Lining, a registered Exodan cargo ship captained by Muriel Saarinen, are believed to have hired Gursky to assist with looting aboard the Oxomoco. Large stores of stolen and illegally obtained goods were found aboard the Silver Lining, in addition to drugs and small weapons. All five crew members have been charged with theft, smuggling, illegal salvage, possession of firearms, and unlicensed possession of a pinhole drive. No murder charges have been reported yet. Jannae Green, a member of the traffic control guild, has been arrested as well. M Green allegedly accepted credits from the thieves in exchange for disabling the Oxomoco’s proximity alert system for several hours while salvaging took place. The supervisory
The council for the Fleet Safety Patrol reminds all citizens that illegal salvage is a serious crime, and is punishable by imprisonment. Patrol also encourages any persons aware of such activity to make an anonymous report, and wants to remind the public that without such a report having been filed, today’s arrests would not have been made so quickly.

| vážný zločin, který se trestá vězením. Patrila dále vyzývá všechny, kteří by se stali svědkem takového jednání, aby událost anonymně ohlásili, a připomíná, že bez takového ohlášení by dnešní zadržení zločinců neproběhlo tak rychle. |
4 Stylistic analysis

English is a language belonging to the Germanic language family. In its history it has been considerably influenced by other languages, mainly French. As it has recently become a lingua franca, spoken by non-native speakers all over the world, it keeps evolving, embracing and creating new lexemes. It is an analytic language, which uses very little inflection and uses auxiliary words and word order to convey the intended meaning.

Czech, on the other hand, comes from the Slavic language family and is an inflectional language, with more liberal word order than English. All in all, English and Czech are very different languages, a fact which needed to be taken into consideration when translating the original text.

Dnes považujeme za základní princip překladu funkční přístup, funkční ekvivalenci.
Znamená to, že nezáleží na tom, použijeme-li stejných či jiných jazykových prostředků, ale na tom, aby plnily stejnou funkci, a to pokud možno po všech stránkách, tedy nejen významově věcné (denotační, referenční), ale i konotační (expresivní, asociativní) a pragmatické. (Knittlová 6)

Ulpívání na jednotlivosti je podstatou neumělé formy „věrného“ překladu, překladu otrockého, který je příznačný pro pedantské překladatele bez uměleckého nadání; naopak zase celostní chápání často svádí právě vynikající překladatele k tomu, že se soustředí na příliš obecné principy, na příliš rozsáhlé celky, a v jejich jménu pak zkreslují jednotlivé myšlenky. (…) Je třeba odhadnout míru samostatnosti detailu a podle toho jej do větší nebo menší míry podřídit celku. (…) Kde slovo nemá význam samo o sobě, nýbrž jen jako součást celku, překládá se celek bez ohledu na významy jednotlivých slov. (Levý 129)

As Knittlová and Levý say, translation is not a transfer of words from one language to another, but a transfer of the meaning. The target text does not have to contain the same words and phrases as the source text, but it must reflect the ideas. The translator may decide to change the length of sentences, the lexical choice or they may even leave something out, if it results with a naturally sounding text reflecting the ideas and nuances of the original text.
4.1 Word choice

The plot of the novel is set in an imaginary distant future, in the time of space travel, when humans live alongside with various alien species. It comes as no surprise that the text features several technical and futuristic terms, including names for things and gadgets, which do not exist in reality. By using these terms, Chambers gives the novel a certain authentic feel, even though the world she has created is obviously an artificial universe.

Examples

They provided you with artigrav, too, yes?

Od nich máte také umělograv, že?

He’d look up Aeluon ships on the Linkings when he got home.

Až se dostane domů, vyhledá si aeluonské lodě na Spojích.

4.2 Specific features

Each country or nationality has certain specific features, e.g. their currency, measuring units and many more. In translation the translator needs to decide whether to retain the specific features of the author’s country or to change them into those of the reader.

4.2.1 Currency

Převádět cizí měnu není možné, protože měna je charakteristická vždy pro určitou zemí a koruny by nám lokalizovaly překlad do našeho prostředí. (Levý 124)

In the case of Chambers’s novel, the universal currency is so called credits (abbreviated as ‘creds’). As it is a completely artificial currency, created only for the purpose of the novel, the task for the translator is even easier here. Since there is no rate given, it would be impossible to establish an equivalence to any existing currency or convert it.
Examples

But now his creds were even more precious than before, and if he’d been laid off, that meant everybody else at the factory had, too.

Ale kredy teď pro něj byly ještě mnohem cennější než dříve a kromě toho, jestli vyhodili jeho, znamenalo to, že vyhodili také všechny ostatní zaměstnance továrny.

4.2.2 Units of time

Various special units of time appear throughout the novel. Because of the foreign setting of the story, our units are not applicable. All the people in the novel seem to use a standardized unit of time (GS standard time). Instead of a week, a term tenday appears, instead of a year they use a so-called standard.

Examples

That was what people wore in the tendays after funerals, so other people knew to cut you some slack and give you some kindness.

Tato stuha se nosila v desetidnech po pohřbech, aby okolí truchlícího věděli, že mají projevit trochu laskavosti.

4.3 Proper nouns

Proper noun is “a name used for an individual person, place, or organization, spelled with an initial capital letter, e.g. Jane, London, and Oxfam.” (Oxford dictionaries) When translating into Czech, proper nouns can be divided into two categories. Rare words and technical terms usually retain their English form, that means that the noun has identical spelling in the original text and in the translation. However, there are many proper nouns which have become naturalized in the Czech language and have their own Czech form.

4.3.1 Geographical names

According to Castañeda-Hernández, it is better and usually more natural to retain the English version of the name which is rare, unknown or has no existing Czech equivalent. (Castañeda-Hernández)
As the plot of Chambers’s novel is set in the distant future in space, most of the names of places are fictional, so the decision whether to retain the English form or to come up with an appropriate Czech translation was entirely within the authorial jurisdiction of the translator. With every name of a place I had to decide which form sounded more natural. In most cases I decided to keep the original term, with the exception of names which are based on the description of the place rather than a real name.

**Examples**

The trick to living on **Mushtullo** was knowing which sunrise to wait for.

Všichni obyvatelé **Mushtulla** věděli, na který východ slunce si počkat.

‘Where are you from?’ (…) ‘**Central space**.’

„Odkud jsi?“ (…) „**Ze Středu**.“

4.3.2  **Personal Names**

This translation generally abides by the previously mentioned Levý’s maxim and leaves the names unchanged, as they either sound perfectly natural in Czech (e.g. Kip, Ras), or are intended to sound unnatural in the English original text, thereby endowing the names of aliens or alien races with local color (e.g. Ghuh’loloan). In both cases the translated text uses regular Czech declination.

**Examples**

Everybody wanted to look good for the **Aeluons**.

Všichni chtěli vypadat dobře před **aeluony**.

She’d learned to do a **Harmagian**-style flash cold brew in the tenday before her colleague arrived.

Desetiden před **Guhh’loloaním** příjezdem se naučila připravovat mok za studena po **harmagianském** způsobu.
4.4 Capitalization

According to Pravidla českého pravopisu, names of nations are capitalized in Czech, while words specifying ethnicity are not (Pravidla českého pravopisu). On the other hand, when it comes to addressing inhabitants of planets, Czech only states two precedents: pozemšťan, spelled with a lower-case p, and Martan, spelled with a capital “M”. Confronted with this minor systemic inconsistency, I eventually decided to view most of the terms for aliens as ethnicities and to spell them with lower-case letter. All the other cases, such as the terms used for inhabitants of a planet or a specific geographic location, are in the target text spelled with capital letters, based on the premise that they are in the same category as names of nations, and also on the precedent of the Czech word Marťan.

Examples

‘You said the Harmagian’s gonna be at the Archives?’

„Říkal jste, že v Archivech bude nějakéj harmagian?“

Soon, the Aeluons would be there, too, and they’d help.

Brzy dorazí aeluoni a pomůžou jim.

4.5 Abbreviations

Abbreviation is “a shortened form of a written word or phrase used in place of the whole word or phrase (Merriam-Webster dictionary).”

When dealing with abbreviations, the translator must pay attention not only to its form, but also to its original meaning. They should firstly translate the original word and then they may try to come up with a suitable abbreviation of the translation. However, if the translated word cannot be abbreviated or sounds unnatural when abbreviated, this is not obligatory.

There are many different ways how to abbreviate a word, two of which appear in the original text I have translated.
4.5.1 Abbreviation by clipping

*Especially in informal usage, we tend to show our familiarity with polysyllabic words (especially nouns), by shortening them, often to a single syllable. The ‘clipping’ seems often to start from the graphic form, since the surviving fragment is usually initial (...).* (Quirk)

**Examples**

There weren’t any new **sims** out, and they’d played all the ones worth playing.

Žádné nové **simky** nevyšly a všechny, které za to stály, už dávno dohráli.

„Get the **cams** out,” she said. ʻStart recording.’

„Vyndej **kamery,**“ zašepťala. „Začni nahrávat.“

4.5.2 Acronymy

ʻAcronyms are words formed from the initial letters of words that make up a name. (Quirk).”

There are two main types of acronyms: acronyms, which are pronounced as a single word, and acronyms pronounced as sequences of letters (also known as ‘alphabetisms’)

**Examples**

ʻI am with junior archivist Deshi Arocha, and the date is **GC** standard 129/303.

„Jsem zde s mladším archivářem Deshim Arochem a datum je 129/330 standardu **GS**.\(^1\)

4.6 Other idiosyncratic lexis

When translating science fiction literature, we usually come across words which do not exist, both in the original and the target language. Such words are used usually to describe futuristic gadgets\(^2\) for situations, which do not occur on the Earth, but might appear in different settings, for example on planets with different conditions such as multi-star systems, or simply for fictional natural phenomena or alien organisms.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) In the original text, **GC** stands for *Galactic Commons*, which was translated as *Galaktické společenství* and abbreviated accordingly.

\(^2\) This may include words such as *artigrav* or *dentobot*, as mentioned above.

\(^3\) Such as *creep mould*, translated as *plazivá plíseň*. 
The translator must then take into consideration many aspects of the word-formating process of the original word, and the meaning of the word in the context to the story, before they can decide on the proper translation.

*To some translation critics of translation, faithfulness in translation is just a word-for-word transmission of message from the source text to the target text, while some believe that fidelity to the source text is adopting the free, idiomatic method in passing on the message.* (Kolawole)

### 4.6.1 Borrowing

In very few cases I decided not to translate the non-existent words, but to leave them in their original form. I made this decision in order to retain the fluency of the text, which I felt would be disrupted, if I translated those words into their Czech equivalents, which did not sound right. All the borrowed words in the target text follow Czech inflection.

**Hex**

The word *hex* as used in the novel refers to a living space, which could be compared to a flat in size and function. I considered translating the word *hex* as *šestihran* or *šestiúhelník*, but eventually decided against it, as both options are too long for almost slang words used so frequently.

It was a nice shirt, the kind of shirt you wore to naming days or weddings, or if someone important came to the *hex* for dinner.

Byla to hezká košile. Taková, kterou si člověk vezme na den jmenování, svatbu, nebo když je do *hexu* pozvaný na večeři někdo důležitý.

### 4.6.2 Modified borrowing

Some of the words I did not translate into their Czech equivalents needed to be altered more than only by declination, so that they would sound more natural in Czech. This was usually because of the absence of some diacritical marks in English, such as in letters “š” or “č”.

I’ve seen configurations like this, but I don’t know that there is an easy word for them in *Klip*. Or *Hanto*.
Various hints led me to believe that the fictional language Ensk, which Chambers created, is intended as a language directly evolved from today’s English. That is the reason why I also changed the first letter of the word from E (Ensk, English) to A (anština, angličtina).

He was more or less fluent in **Ensk**, having crammed Linking language lessons hard over the past few years (...).

**Ansky** mluvil více méně plynule, posledních pár let poctivě projížděl všechny možné lekce na Spojích(...).

### 4.6.3 Compounds

*A compound is a lexical unit consisting of more than one base and functioning both grammatically and semantically as a single word. In principle, any number of bases may be involved, but in English, except for a relatively minor class of items compounds usually comprise of two items only, however internally complex each may be.* (Quirk)

**Bot**

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the word *bot* is an abbreviation, a shortened version of an originally Czech word *robot*, which was created by Karel Čapek for the purposes of his play R.U.R. The word *robot* was later adopted by English as well as many other languages. Although it may sound foreign, it is in fact a Czech word, which is the reason why I left it in its original form. (*Online Etymology Dictionary*)

Chambers also uses the word *bot* in compounds indicating its function and purpose, such as *cleanerbot* or *dentobot*, ergo gadgets used for cleaning or dental hygiene. In such cases I retained the part bot in its original form and accordingly translated and modified only the parts denoting the function.
The sink shelf slid out, a thick rectangle with a basin and a pop-up mirror and the almost-empty box of *dentbot* packs he needed to restock.

Ze stěny před ním vyjela police, obdélník se zapuštěným umyvadlem, zrcadlem a skoro prázdnou krabicí s baleními *zubotů*. Brzy je bude muset doplnit.

**Artigrav**

The word artigrav is the same case as the word bot, it is the product of blending two words, artificial and gravity. While the word artificial is an English word, the Czech and English words for gravity both have a common origin in Latin and are very similar. That is why I kept the second part of the compound as it was and only translated the first one.

I’ve only ever lived in *artigrav*.

*Zažila jsem jen umělograv.*

**4.6.4 Semantic shifts**

Some of the words used by Chambers are ordinary and frequent even in the contemporary world, but for the purposes of the novel take on an additional meaning, which is very specific in the futuristic lexis of the novel. I will now list some of them.

**Linkings – Spoje**

In the novel the word *Linkings* is used for something very similar to today’s internet.

I translated it analogically and retained the capital letter at the beginning, to avoid possible confusion of the reader.

He’d look up Aeluon ships on the *Linkings* when he got home.

*Až se dostane domů, vyhledá si aeluonské lodě na Spojích.*
The word *kick* denotes a liquid, similar or the same as alcohol. Again, my translation was analogical. I considered the Czech version *kopanec*, but in the end I decided to use the shorter version, as it sounds sharper and is more similar to the original word.

Among the recognisable boxes – mek powder, root sugar, bottles of *kick* – there were three plex tanks full of water, like jellyfish tanks.

Mezi obyčejnými krabicemi moku v prášku a kořenového cukru a lahvemi *kopu* ležely tři plexové nádoby plné vody, podobné nádržím na medúzy.

**Magic Morning Power Porridge – Kouzelná krupičná kaše**

In this case I was not trying to create an analogical and faithful translation, but my main goal was to come up with a translation, which would retain the alliterative tendency.

He knew he had a long day at work ahead, so he opted for two packs of *Magic Morning Power Porridge*.

Měl před sebou dlouhý den v práci, tak sáhl po dvou baleních *Kouzelné krupičné kaše*.

**4.6.5 Invented words and phrases**

In this category are words and phrases, which were invented by Chambers herself and are not compounds of already existing words.

**Mek – mok**

The word mek describes a fictional beverage, according to some hints I assume it has very similar effect as coffee. I chose not to keep the original form, but to change it slightly. The connection of the translated and the original form are obvious, but while the English word carries no other connotations, the Czech word *mok* is an archaic word for a drink. The second reason I made this change is for its connection with coffee – the word *mok* may connotate with *mocca*, or its Czech version, *moka*, which are both names for a certain type of coffee.

M Santoso kind of just let me hang out. Let me have mek during my shift.
4.7 Lexical and morphological factors promoting gender neutrality

Several factors led me to believe, that the way the characters of the novel address each other is aimed at a complete neutralization and equalization of gender in their formal speech.

1. Shortening of the titles Mr., Mrs., Ms., to the title M, which is then used both for men and women. I was reluctant, whether to translate this title as P (short for pan/pani), or whether to preserve the distinction between genders, despite the author’s goal, and to differentiate the titles as P and M (pan and madam). I then chose to retain the gender neutrality, even though it does not have the same effect in Czech. If this minor difference is deleted, the reader is unable to tell, whether the subject of the sentence is a man or a woman. To reach this level of gender neutrality in Czech, we would have to omit the declination, in which the difference is obvious.

**Examples**

‘M Itoh has a Harmagian guest arriving today.’

“Za P Itoh má dnes přijet host, harmagian.”

M Santoso hadn’t given him a specific time that he needed to be back.

P Santoso mu přesný čas neřekla

2. Using the general pronoun xe or xyr, which is used every time a character or the reader does not know, whether the subject of a sentence is a man or a woman. It was difficult to come up with a suitable equivalent. Finally I decided that it would sound more natural in these cases to simply avoid using any personal pronouns, which would require me knowing and revealing the gender of such person.

**Examples**

The child did nothing but bury xyr face as far as it would go into xyr father’s shirt.

Dítě jen zabořilo obličej do otcovy košile.

3. The two points above helped me make a decision regarding women’s surnames. With respect to retaining at least some elements of gender neutrality in formal addressing of the characters, I decided not to change them using Czech suffixes such as -ová, -ovská,
-á. On the contrary, I kept them in their original form, which is identical to the male version of the surname. That way at least some aspects of the gender neutrality and equality are preserved in the target text.

**Examples**

M Green allegedly accepted credits from the thieves in exchange for disabling the Oxomoco’s proximity alert system for several hours while salvaging took place.

P Green od zlodějů údajně přijala úplatek, na základě kterého následně na několik hodin vyřadila z provozu bezpečnostní systémy Oxomoca.

4. Contrary to that, I have made a slight change in the first name of one of the main characters and I translated Isabel as Isabela, with the Czech female ending. I did that for two reasons. First, with Czech pronunciation of both of the options, the original option sounded very unnatural to me, whereas the second option is a generally accepted Czech equivalent of the name. Secondly, I considered other female names appearing in the book and most of them do not appear to be gender neutral names, but as names specifically meant for girls and women (e.g. Amira, Tessa, Aya⁴). We can conclude, that gender neutralization was probably intended to be applied in formal speech only, not when the characters address each other on a first name basis.

**Examples**

Every homesteader had its Archives and archivists, but Isabel was the current oldest of her profession.

Každý osadník měl svůj archiv, ale Isabela byla mezi jejich představenými nejstarší.

4.8 Idioms

Idiom is a fixed expression or a phrase with a non-literal meaning. It is usually difficult to determine its figurative meaning by analysing its parts. Their meaning is often not obvious at first sight, but the level of their transparency differs from case to case. Some idioms can be identified quite easily, some can not be translated properly unless we know them by heart.

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⁴ The names Tessa and Aya are not mentioned in the translated extract.
Idioms can be sources of many translatory mistakes, if the translator is not familiar with its figurative meaning and translates them literally instead.

**Examples**

He had new bosses to impress, and *this already wasn’t his day.*

Měl jít ohromit své nové šéfy, ale už od rána *se mu smůla lepila na paty.*

But that, too, was a *rookie mistake.*

Ale i to byla *začátečnická chyba.*
Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to reveal difficulties which a translator may come across when translating a futuristic science-fiction story. I focused mainly on the lexical properties of the text, as its originality stems from lexical items specifically designed and invented to help create the futuristic and alienated atmosphere.

In the theoretical part I addressed the topics of translating proper nouns and terms denoting specific features, such as currency or units of time, but the largest part of my analysis was dedicated to investigate specific processes of word formation used by the author when creating the fictional lexical items.

During the translation, I consulted the works of two prominent Czech experts on translating, Dagmar Knittlová and Jiří Levý. Despite their guidance, I got stuck many times and it often took me a long time to come up with an adequate Czech equivalent for some of the neologisms. I usually tried to follow the same pattern as the author did, but my main goal was to translate it in a manner which would sound natural and smooth.

I hope I managed to retain the style and the spirit of the original text. I am looking forward to reading the official translation when it is released and comparing the translator’s approach to mine.
6 Works Cited


