



# EMAIL FROM THE FUTURE

A SHORT STORY BY  
**MICHAEL ROGERS**

# Email from the Future

By Michael Rogers

To: TechGirl  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: About Time!

Wow! What does a person have to do to get out of your spam folder?!?

Or maybe this is the first time one of my emails came through. Doesn't matter. I'm just extremely *extremely* glad you answered!

I like your blog—love your take on tech—and so I have a project to tell you about. But first you have to promise me that you will tell no one, not anybody at all, about this for now. No blogging, no tweeting, nothing. Although when the project is over, you'll have the exclusive. Is that OK?

Teddy

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Please Answer!

OK, you're ignoring me. I can understand that. But please believe me: I'm not in Nigeria or Ukraine or anyplace like that! This isn't a scam. It actually IS a research project. I'm a scientist working in Canada, and I need a reliable email correspondent with good technical skills.

I know that sounds vague, but maybe this will help get your interest: Name any five stocks that trade on the New York Stock Exchange, and I will tell you something remarkable.

Teddy

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Re: Please Answer!

Well, I guess I'm not surprised. More silence. Maybe that was a dumb way to start because now it *really* sounds like some kind of scam. But don't give up on me!

I'll pick five myself. I'm going to tell you each stock's closing price two days from now. PLEASE, DO NOTHING WITH THIS INFORMATION! Just hold onto it and check it after the market closes.

GE	20.50
Apple	542.15
Intel	28.87
Microsoft	35.15
General Motors	27.90

I look forward to hearing from you in a few days.

Teddy

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: WTF????

Whoa, please! That's a lot of questions, but I'm very glad you're interested.

Most important:

- 1) No, that wasn't a trick about the stock prices. I just looked them up.
- 2) No, I'm not going to ask you for money. As I said, I only want your help.

This next part is going to be hard to believe, so I'm just going to say it. I'm writing this in September of 2040. I work in a research facility for Farsight Nuclear Corporation near Toronto. I'm 26 years old, an indentured apprentice, working off my education debt.

I'm on a project where we make computer memory more efficient by having many bits of data occupy the same location, but each one in a slightly different slice of time. It's called quantum time-shifting and we've known about it since the Twenties. So far, it's had no practical application beyond computer memory—you can't time-shift anything much bigger than an electron. Which isn't that interesting, unless you're an electron.

A few months ago, I began to wonder whether these chips we're experimenting with might be able to time-shift larger pieces of data. So I borrowed one, which was sort of—well, completely—illegal. For two months now I have been processing mail messages through the memory module, all addressed to the mail address in your blog, and dated for late summer, 2012. Over and over, changing various parameters.

I had no idea if one of them would ever reach you. In fact I'd already decided that at the end of the month I'd give up.

When I received your email four days ago, it was as if all the breath had been knocked out of me. I couldn't even think for the rest of the day. It was so obvious to the other lab rats at Farsight that something was wrong with me that I didn't dare stay around. I went home early and went to bed and just stared at the ceiling and tried to think about what to do next.

So far I can only send very short pieces of information; it looks like it tops out about 8K. No pictures, no sound. It's a narrow bandwidth; the packets need to be structured precisely.

So will you help me study this phenomenon? I'll end this email now and let you think also.

By the way, although you called me "guy" in your last email, my full name is actually Theodora. So this is kind of a girls' time-shifting club...

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2012  
Re: re: Too Weird

Please, I do know how you must feel, at least a little—this is pretty crazy.

It's funny that you think I might be somebody in 2012 playing a trick on you. In fact, that's exactly what I was starting to wonder. After your first email, I woke up in the middle of the night with the sudden thought that perhaps all my emails had simply reached someone in 2040 who is now spoofing *me*.

So I lightened the room and spent three hours in the Web, studying all the paths of your mail and they don't trace to any contemporary IP address. Your path just starts. (And my backpath just ends.) Your mail also lacks SureID tags, which is almost impossible to do; you can turn SureID to anon, but taking it off completely is technically difficult, not to mention very illegal. Why would someone break the global Web security laws just to have some fun with an indentured apprentice?

So I believe it's really *you*, for what that may be worth.

I understand how strange this must seem. Trust me, I find it very difficult to believe this myself, even though I at least have some technical explanation. There was quite a bit of excitement about quantum time-shifting in the Twenties, but it never really turned into anything. That's probably the only reason they even let a voucher apprentice like me work on time-shifting; nobody really thinks anything good will come of it.

Before I tell anyone about this I want to understand it better myself; how it works and what it might mean to the world. Whether it's good, or bad, or indifferent, what damage it can do, how it can be misused. There's so much we don't know about time.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2012  
Re: So, Am I?

Wow. It never occurred to me that you might ask that. But of course you would.

Here's the thing: I can't find out whether you are still alive in 2040, because I don't know who you actually are. You don't reveal your real name in your blog.

And that's one of the reasons I chose you. You NEVER give your real name on your blog, at least as far as I could tell—you're always just TechGirl. (I'm assuming you work for some big company and need to stay anonymous.) And I don't *want* to know who you really are. Otherwise I might pass on actionable information and that would break the law.

I hope you understand that and it's OK to proceed.

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2040

Re: Actionable information????

Yes, there's a law about this. Actually, a whole Treaty. In the mid-Twenties, after quantum time-shifting was discovered, there was a conference in Geneva to draft guidelines for safe time research.

I was a kid then but I remember it was a big media event; protestors and government hearings and so on. "Potentially more dangerous than nuclear weapons," that sort of thing. And there were Web remakes of every time travel story ever written.

Finally the guidelines got turned into the Temporal Research Controls Treaty. Basically TRTC says: if successful time-shifting occurs there can be no technology transfer; no exchange of personally actionable data; no transfer of physical material; no environmental alteration. It's supposed to prevent "forward ripples." You know, catastrophic alterations in history, like all those science fiction stories about going back in time and accidentally killing your own grandfather so you cease to exist. All temporal research is supposed to be cleared with the UN Technology Council to prevent forward ripples.

But the rules don't say anything about email! Ha Ha, as you say in the Teens.

Of course we still don't even know if full time-shifting is possible. If it is, then presumably at some point in the future it's being done, and so we should already have evidence of the future intruding on the present. And there's certainly nothing of that in the historical record. But on the other hand, if those researchers really followed the TRCT guidelines then they wouldn't have left footprints. So I don't want to leave footprints either.

Anyway. (I know I go on too much. I love writing longmail and I don't get much chance to do it.) I will already be in a great deal of trouble if and when Farsight finds out that I misappropriated a time-shifter. The only way I can possibly save myself is to have done enough solid research that they have to keep me working.

And, of course, I want to show them that I followed the Treaty. Except that part about asking permission first, which I've never been so good at.

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2012

Re: Why me?

How did I find you? Anyone can read just about everything in the Web way back to before the turn of the century. It's all somewhere—either the big public memories or the searchers, or—who knows where?—some random server stuck somewhere in the world.

Well. Actually, you can read pretty much everything up to the late Teens, when people got more careful. By then there was already a big business in record eradication. Then we got autoencryption, and self-destructing mail and finally SureID and the private Nets, so the more recent record isn't as complete as it was in the early days.

It's amazing what people put out in public back in the Nineties and Zeroes. That was such a wild and free and optimistic time; I think I would have loved it.

And yes, writing has always been my favorite hobby. I belonged to a writing group when I was younger and I still have wordpals from those days. Millions of people around the world still write and read. I think some of them do it as a status symbol—oh, look, I can *type* a mail without using an autoparser—but more of us do it because we love it. In fact I still write longmail to one of my best friends, who lives in Vietnam. But my other best friend, in New York City, doesn't write at all, so we always link.

So writing to someone who actually reads longmail is exciting for me, and please excuse me if I meander. (Had to look that one up. Meander. I love archaic language too. Maybe I was destined to time-shift.)

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2040

Re: Here's the Experiment

OK, so here's what I'd like to do. Ever since I was a college student and started reading about time-shifting, it's seemed to me that the Treaty research restrictions get in the way of answering the really interesting question: is time, the course of events, absolute and unchangeable? Or does time permit us to make changes even when history is already written? Is there retrospective free will?

That's really the only interesting question, as far as I can tell. And in order to answer it I have to bend the Treaty restrictions just a bit. That's the experiment I've come up with: something that involves both time and money.

Quite a bit of money, in fact. Here's my idea. Your California lottery has a game called UltraLotto. I'm not sure if you've ever played it, but you pick six numbers, and if you get them all correct, you win the largest prize. In another week, your time, the prize is going to be about fifteen million dollars. But nobody is going to win it. Which means the money goes back into the state budget. And that's what we're going to try and change.

I will give you the six correct numbers, you'll buy a lottery ticket, and—if time and events are in fact changeable—you'll win. But since it's money that would otherwise disappear into a giant state budget, it should cause relatively few forward ripples.

Now if that doesn't sound like some kind of scam, I don't know what would. See why I couldn't tell you about it right from the beginning?

Anyway. Let me know what you think. Obviously, before next week. The drawing is on Wednesday night, 9 PM, Pacific Time. I think you have to buy your ticket at least three hours before that.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: re: Here's the Experiment

I know. It sounds really crazy. But what's it going to cost you? Well, to be exact, the ticket will cost \$3, according to my research. That's funny, that you've never bought one before.

And of course you want to know what we'll do with the money. You'll ask for the immediate lump sum, rather than the twenty year payments. That cuts down the principal quite a bit but still, after taxes and all, you'll get about six million dollars. My proposition is that we split this. You take half, and then you arrange that I get the other half. I'll tell you how later.

If you've never bought a ticket before, it's going to be quite a case of beginner's luck when you win. If I were you I'd try to keep your name out of the media; they allow winners to remain anonymous and that's what you should ask for. Minimize Forward Ripples, that's our motto.

To: Teddy2012  
Fr: TechGrrl  
Re: So who are you?

OK, that's a fair question. I guess I do know a little bit more about you than you know about me. And this won't take long.

I'm first generation Canadian; my parents came here from California, a couple of years after the Silicon Valley quake, at the start of the big migration in the Twenties. My father was a program analyst and my mother was a technical writer. They maybe could have still found work in the States, but they decided to leave.

Back then Canada had a prime minister, "Canada's JFK", who started a big immigration program for knowledge workers in software, biotech, nano, and like that. So my parents got settlement money and qualified for baby bonuses and so forth. But I think in the end my folks left for the usual immigrant reason: more opportunity for their kids than in the Old Country. And with the warming, the weather in Canada is very nice; people say it's like the States before the great drought. Three of my grandparents still live in the US; one of them euthanized when I was a teenager.

Ordinary childhood. I played soccer, pretty well, and was slotted in advanced math/physics after fifth grade. I tested out very high, which was just luck, because I was born right *before* prenatal aptitude selects were widely available. My sister Veronica, who is seventeen, was selected for numerospatial reasoning, and she's a pretty scary mathematician already.

I went to public high school in Toronto and did well enough that Farsight Nuclear indentured me for Tsinghua University in Beijing. About 40% of Tsinghua is foreign students, so it was a fun place. After Tsinghua I came back to Toronto. I'm working at FNC's R&D lab while I finish my doctorate at the Stanford campus here. It counts as half-credit toward my indenture, so once I have my doctorate I'll only have another three years to work before I'm a free agent.

Freedom! Isn't that what we all want?

What else? I have a boyfriend, Peter, who's doing graduate work in neural prosthetics. I like ice-skating and music from the Teens.

And I guess that's about it. Anything else you'd like to know?

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2040

Re: re: Who Are You?

This may sound weird, but here's something else I really like. I volunteer to work with Boomers at a senior center two days a week. They mostly just need someone to talk to. They could wear a headpiece and link with lots of volunteers on the Web, but Boomers always want someone in person, someone in the room with them.

I always visit an American woman who is 92 and calls herself Sunshine. (If you ask for her last name she says, The Rainbow Chaser.) Her only late-stage brain dysfunction was Alzheimer's, easily treated, so she's still completely sharp—she just doesn't like to talk about anything much after 2020 or so. I'm pretty sure she actually was at Woodstock, although the nurses say that if every old-old who says they were at Woodstock really was, Woodstock would have been the 51<sup>st</sup> state.

Sunshine is amazing; she's on her fifth kidney, half her major joints are synthetic, she has retinal and cochlear implants and neural stimulators and a cloned liver. But she's not obese—that's what really kills Boomers—so she's probably good for another ten years. But she's lucky, too. Her daughter Tiffany is 70 and works at a cloud farm outside Vancouver, so that's how Sunshine got into the Canadian healthcare system.

She used to live in Las Vegas, before the drought. She has an old-fashioned newspaper printout from then; it's a cute story about a McDonald's restaurant where she worked and everyone on staff was over seventy years old! But then when Las Vegas dried up and they shut down the suburbs she lost everything. Most of Sunshine's friends are in federal SeniorCamps, but Tiffany brought her up here.

Anyway, last week I told her I was having trouble sleeping. So today she gave me a lavender-filled eye cushion she'd made from herbs she found somewhere. She says lavender is good for relaxation and if you have gentle weight on the lids your eyes don't wander and you sleep better. They work! And no electronics at all!

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2040

Re: Why Not?

OK! This will be VERY interesting.

Here we go: 17, 43, 56, 2, 19, 78. Don't let anyone else see these numbers; if they copy them and enter then the prize splits.



Please buy the ticket as soon as possible after you see this email. T minus something, and counting! I'm going to start searching the California newspaper archives as soon as I send this.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Why Not?

It's been a day since you bought it and nothing. The lottery listing for September 12<sup>th</sup> 2012 hasn't changed. No winner. I don't know what went wrong.

Are you sure you bought the right ticket? UltraLottery for the September 12 drawing? Can you check the numbers again?

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: About Time!

OK. Then we'll just have to wait until the drawing itself. My theory was that simply buying the ticket with the correct numbers would be enough to change reality. Clearly not.

I guess it's just been one of those days for me.

I got a big shock this morning, that I still can't quite believe. Out of the blue, when I visited her at the home, my friend Sunshine announced that she's leaving to go back to the States in three weeks. She's been talking about it for at least a year, but I didn't really think she was serious. Because she doesn't have money, that means a SeniorCamp.

Now, American SeniorCamps aren't as bad as the media makes them sound, but they're not exactly state-of-the-art *anything*; they're funded with what was left of the Social Security trust. But really. Here in Toronto she has a room with one roommate; in the States, she'll be in a dormitory.

Worse: She's over 90, so in the States she'll be on pretty strict care rationing. Sunshine's kidneys are failing again; her implants are ten years old and that's about as long as pig clones last. In the US, she'd get a recycled Chinese bioreactor instead of fresh clones, and the next time something goes wrong, who knows. The nurses here say she'd euthanize before she was 100.

So I talked to her about it for a long time today. I asked, What does your daughter say?

It's not her life, Sunshine told me, it's my life.

But there's so much to do in the Toronto residence house, I told her—what are you going to do in Reno?

I'll be with Americans, she said. I want to be with the people I grew up with. So what if it's not a palace with gadgets coming out of the walls? It's the place I belong.

We talked for a while longer, but she's set on going back—it's like I said, Americans are the most patriotic people on earth. It's really very sweet, in a world where a lot of my friends don't really pay much attention to what country they're in—India, Singapore, Estonia, Nigeria—as long as they have good work. But Americans really care and even if the conditions maybe aren't great, they always want to go home.

I'll miss Sunshine a lot. Probably more than she'll miss me.

To: TECHGIRL

Fr: Teddy2040

Re: Maybe....

Well, thanks, that's a hopeful thought, maybe I can still talk her out of it. But I can also understand her, because sometimes I miss the United States myself.

My parents have a lot of nostalgia for the US. I don't think they ever really got used to Canada, and it didn't do their relationship any good. But we used to go back to visit a lot. The Fourth of July celebrations are amazing—every town just puts on a great show, no matter how poor they are. And American entertainers are still the best—Americans will do anything, say anything; they're as crazy as the Japanese when there's a chance to be linked. I read that entertainment is now the US's largest export.

I think the US just had a lot of bad luck and some bad planning. There was the Shia-Sunni War, which destroyed so much oil, and then all the Cat 5 hurricanes, and finally the Silicon Valley quake. It wasn't that the economy collapsed; it just couldn't quite get back on its feet before something new came along. My father used to say that the US was like a person who has always been very healthy and never thought about illness, and then suddenly had all these diseases.

And things just got very out of balance. After Shia-Sunni, with gas rationing, it was hard to get around. So you could buy a house in the suburbs, big enough for two or three families, for almost nothing. Finally the government made the suburban houses free, just to have people in them. But then where did you work? The private bus lines were always going out of business and outsourcing centers didn't really take off. (If a company is going to build anything terrestrial they're going someplace like Chengdu or Edmonton, not an American suburb with half-educated kids and no transportation.)

At the same time all the rich people, from all over the world, bought places in the U.S. cities like LA and New York, and those housing prices were ridiculous. If your parents didn't own property, you weren't going to either. Young couples starting out in the Twenties didn't have a lot of good choices, so places like Canada and Greenland started to look better and better.

What made the US really strange in the Twenties was that at the same time, some people just had so much money. In my primary school in Toronto they showed a short interactive called "The First Two Billion Dollar House"; it was built out in New Jersey, where this investment banker completely domed

this five acre estate so it had perfect weather year-round with palm groves and orchids and tropical reefs. He built this incredible mansion, and his kids had their own waterpark.

I was about ten when I saw this so I really remember that huge waterpark with only three or four of these rich kids in it. We were supposed to think, oh, that's where the States went wrong, but all I could think was how cool it would be to have your own waterpark.

The US is the best place in the world to be a rich person. Americans love rich people, because they all still think they're going to be rich themselves. Me too, I guess. Once an American, always an American.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: OMG

Oh my God, indeed. I feel like running all over Toronto shouting, but of course I can't.

It worked! Overnight, sometime while I was asleep, the historical record shifted. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, the lottery held on September 12, 2012 had an anonymous top prize winner, with a ticket purchased at a liquor store in the Mission District.

That article *was not there* when I looked the day before. Somehow the events didn't shift until the actual drawing. I get it now: the numbers are randomly generated and didn't exist in the altered timestream until they were actually created in the drawing ceremony. Fascinating.

So time is malleable. It's not "forever" or eternal. But it didn't change instantly when you bought the ticket. It was only when the drawing took place that reality altered. So it literally was a ripple that moves forward.

It's proof of the forward ripple. I have to get all this documented tonight before I forget anything. I'm either going to win the Nobel Prize in physics or go to prison for violating the Guidelines. But the way I see it, someone *had* to.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Lottery Commission email

I know. It's kind of a let-down. Now we wait. But it's great that the Lottery Commission will do an electronic transfer. And three weeks is about how long I expected it to take. While we're waiting we can think about what we're going to do with it.

But first, here's the rest of the experiment. When the money arrives in your account we're going to try to transfer my half to 2040.

Here's what I'd like you to do: convert my half of the winnings to Bitcoin. I'm sure you've heard about Bitcoin; it's an anonymous digital currency that was invented by someone—nobody knows who, even now—in 2009. In your time you can convert dollars to Bitcoin online—you do it from your bank

account, just like doing an international transfer. People are actually buying things with Bitcoin in 2012; I think the exchange rate is about five dollars to one Bitcoin.

It's kind of a hacker, geeky thing in 2012 but believe me, digital money is going to catch on later in the Teens, and then especially the Twenties. After all the problems with the Euro, and then the dollar, it got to the point where people all over the world started to keep some of their money in Bitcoin. It was the one currency that no government could actually screw up.

As soon as you do the currency transfer and send me the digital key, I'll check the account. We'll know instantly whether we really can time-shift in both directions. I've changed your reality, you will change mine. And nobody is going to know but you and me, because pre-2025 Bitcoin is still anonymous.

I may not even tell my boyfriend Peter, at least not right away. And that won't be too hard, since he lives in Shanghai.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: About Time!

Yes, Shanghai. He's been my boyfriend for three years; we met online our first year of graduate school. Someday, when it's the right time, we'll meet in person. But for now, virtual is better. I saw him this morning when he said goodnight.

I don't know if he's ever going to be part of my real life. I can't imagine Peter leaving China. He has very old family; they own buildings in Pudong and mines in Africa. I mean, he has a fulltime bodyguard—that kind of thing. And I certainly can't see myself in China. The Chinese are such snobs compared to Westerners, so class-oriented. No matter what happens in Beijing, the same families are always rich and powerful. I like having a Chinese boyfriend, at a distance. And if you must know, for the physical part, we use Dr. Dean's high-bandwidth two-ways, they fit very well and there's no latency so they're really intense. And that's all I want to say about that.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: What I'll do

Travel! That's a great idea. Three million after taxes should take you a long way. You should see places like the Everglades, or New Orleans, that won't be around much longer.

What am I going to do with the money? It's weird, but I really don't know. I mean, I thought of this as an experiment, really. I know it breaks the Treaty rules, a little, about the actionable information part, but I feel like I'm not really leaving footprints so much as just paying a local inhabitant to help me with my research.

So what will I do? This sounds crazy, but I think I'd like to fund a pet refuge for hybrids, who have just had a terrible time. My favorite pet when I was growing up was my little calico manxhund Cleo—one of the cat-dog hybrids. Now *there's* an example where trying to restrict technology didn't make sense.

Hybrids are sterile, so the only way to produce manxhunds and beaglets and poosets is cloning. Just to make it more confusing, that means they were illegal in the US and Europe but not in Canada or China. What sense does that make?

The bad thing was that my Cleo got killed by a couple of dogs; that's the one thing about hybrids—you can't ever let them out because naturals just go crazy around them. And now hybrids aren't so popular anymore. There's this whole "natural pet" movement, which is pretty ridiculous, as if a Pekingese had any resemblance whatsoever to ancestral canids! A lot of hybrids are getting abandoned these days. So I was thinking I could start a shelter to take them in. Teddy's Home for Hybrids!

In some ways it might be better than staying at the Lab. The first generation of the prenatal neuroselects are coming in now, as apprentices, and they're so damn brilliant they're just going to take over the place.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Success!

Well. Deep breath. It worked!

And because Bitcoin has increased in value since you purchased it in 2012, it's now actually worth considerably more than three million dollars.

Our first experiment is finished, and it couldn't have worked any better. I'm going to take the next week or so to finish documenting everything, and we'll try a second experiment.

In the meantime, please please please keep to your normal schedule as much as possible. Remember: Minimize Forward Ripples!

I'll write more soon.

To: TECHGIRL  
Fr: Teddy2040  
Re: Farewell

Now the experiment is really over, and I'm sad.

The Bitcoin in our account won't quite get me that two billion dollar house in New Jersey, but it will buy me out of my education indenture here in Toronto. And then I'm going to be pretty comfortable when I move back to the US. And so will Sunshine. I mean, she's become something like a mother to me. I can't let her go without me.

I'm just sorry, sorry, sorry that you won't be able to share in our good fortune, because I've really gotten to like writing to you. Even now I find myself writing to you, even though I know you're not going to read this.

I'm afraid I lied a little bit about knowing whether you are alive in 2040. In fact, I do know, and you aren't. But what good would it have done to tell you about the bus?

Well, obviously, it would have prevented you from stepping in front of it, but altering lifespan would be a major, major violation of the Treaty and I have no idea what it would have done to history.

And even if it hadn't changed history, how likely would it be that you wouldn't, sooner or later, have told someone about the exact way you won the UltraLottery? One way or another, I saw forward ripples, and I would have ended up in court facing illegal time-shifting charges.

No. Sunshine and I discussed this for a long time because it was a very hard decision for me to make. But Sunshine convinced me that we had to do it. And after all, she was the one who came up with the whole idea in the first place.

See: I just couldn't let her move back to the States by herself and go into a SeniorCamp. But for the last year, every time I tried to talk her out of it, she said, the only alternative would be if she went back to the States *rich*, and she didn't think that was very likely.

A few months ago I told her about the time-shifting research, and one thing led to another, and pretty soon I was looking for a pen pal in 2012. In fact, I was looking for *you*, because Sunshine used to read the TechGirl blog and remembered your story, especially the tragedy. Like I said, she's got an incredible memory.

I'm going to miss writing to you, very much. I suppose I'll try the penpal sites again. Sure, they're kind of weird and they worry too much about apostrophes, but at least they're in my own era.

When we get to the US, we're going to buy land outside San Francisco and grow something called aloe, which Sunshine says is drought-resistant and will cure everything. And I'm going to forget this whole experiment. Some kinds of technology are just too dangerous to share, and I don't want to be the next one who gets email from the future. As Sunshine likes to say, you only go around once, and that's just the way it should be.