

Paardebloem

FROM: Office of The President, HQ

TO: Prof. Anton Van den Brook, HQ

SUBJECT: INFORMAL MEETING

Professor Van den Brook,

President Inayik congratulates you on your return to Headquarters and hopes you enjoyed the surprise reception upon your arrival. He would like to meet with you as soon as possible, in private, to discuss issues that require your attention as Special Scientific Advisor. In order to avoid any interference with your smooth reintegration into the service, he proposes an informal meeting, in the evening, as you used to do with his late predecessor. The issue to be addressed is wide ranging and will likely require the use of many internal and external resources, but this meeting is only intended to provide a summary overview of the situation and will therefore be short in duration. The content is to be kept confidential for now.

Bao Zhang 张宝

On behalf of President Inayik

[A FEW DAYS LATER]

"Good evening, Mr. President, I am of course at your disposal for any question within my expertise, but why the mystery?"

"You already know how I feel about my appointment to this high office, said the President, however since I am here, I believe it is my responsibility to serve the world's population as well as I may. As an islander, I am keenly aware of the impact of global warming. It is undeniable that sea levels will rise, and we are already dealing with [extreme weather events](#). I would like you to look at this issue and give me your opinion on how to counter its effects without worrying the public."

"I see your point, said the professor, it is a huge problem involving human activity, the Earth's magnetic field, the albedo of the planet and solar activity, as well as the reaction of the biomass. Some consider cleaning up the atmosphere and oceans as a daunting task and would tend to give up, but where humanity's efforts might be insufficient, I see the possibility of using microorganisms, following the example of Japan, where certain bacteria have been discovered that degrade plastics. It's working, albeit too slowly to be practical for now, it is

said. Research in this field should be encouraged to find more efficient varieties, or to create some using genetic engineering."

"As to the Earth's magnetic field, we know that Mars was once an oceanic planet, but that by losing its magnetic field, it has become over time today's desert planet. There is currently no known way to strengthen the Earth's magnetic field and I would not risk potentially disastrous experiments on the central core as long as we inhabit the Earth. Perhaps we could however by work on the albedo of the polar regions. It has been discovered that some algae tend to colonize icy areas at the poles and accelerate melting of the pack by turning it red. If we could limit this invasion, it would buy us some time..."

"If I may, I could inquire about geomagnetism issues with my colleague and friend at CERN, Professor Von Gartner, who knows a lot more about magnetic fields than I..."

"Um, yes, I seem to recall that she once cooperated with Headquarters and was responsible for your brief stay at the Mariana Marine Colony. It is so stated in your personnel file. So, investigate discreetly into the matter and I'll think about it on my side. More on that later. For now, I'm a little tired and so are you, I assume. Good night!"

[THE FOLLOWING WEEK]

As he was about to head to his office that morning, the professor suddenly noticed a crowd of staff in front of the electronic bulletin board in the common room and thought he could hear muffled interjections of fearful astonishment....

"What's going on," he said, approaching... They make room for him and then he sees the following article of the Guam Daily Post displayed on screen:

EXCLUSIVE STORY BY OUR REPORTER IN THE CAPITAL

Breaking with several decades of practice within the Planetary Administration, *President Inayik* addressed the global scientific community directly to prompt SR&ED concerns to direct their efforts in the field of genetic engineering to research and create new strains of microorganisms capable of degrading more effectively plastic and microplastic pollutants and/or various toxic chemicals that are too often dumped in the environment. There is also a desire to increase the creation of GHG capture and sequestration facilities to reduce global warming and find ways to protect the planet from potential bursts of solar activity that might affect the climate and communication networks. Funds will be made available for this purpose for the most promising projects...

The editors of the *Post* are aware that such measures will not translate into meaningful results overnight, but it is reassuring to see that one of our own cares about the future of the planet and the well-being of its citizens...

The professor remains stricken dumb and says to himself in petto: "Wow! That's a daring approach. I wonder what the Eleven will think of that. But after all, maybe they will not oppose it, since this is just another way of doing nothing... The solution is not for tomorrow, nor even for the day after, if I may put it that way. However, it is a beginning. Once the idea is cast, it might generate other more concrete developments while calming the public. It's a bit like throwing seeds in the wind and hoping that some will fall into fertile soil. Nature does the same successfully..."
