

RE: BUBBLE 476

A. T. Greenblatt

A.T. Greenblatt (<https://atgreenblatt.com> and Twitter @AtGreenblatt) is a mechanical engineer by day and a writer by night. She lives in Philadelphia where she's known to frequently subject her friends to various cooking and home brewing experiments. This Nebula-award-winning author is a graduate of Viable Paradise XVI and Clarion West 2017. Her work has been published in multiple Year's Best anthologies, and has appeared in *Uncanny*, *Beneath Ceaseless Skies*, *Lightspeed*, *Clarkesworld*, and other fine publications. She tells us that her first tale for *Asimov's* was written in January/February 2020 right before the pandemic hit the US. It was a time when she was blissfully unaware that soon we would all be in our own bubble universes of a sort.

To: Geo Torres
From: Deni Cohen
Sent Friday, April 23, 2032, 16:44 GMT
Subject: Bubble 476—Response Needed

* * *

Geo,

You've been in your Bubble for 4 hrs already and I haven't gotten an email from you. WTF man? You still alive????

Love,
Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
From: Geo Torres
Sent Friday, April 23, 2032, 17:21 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Response Sent

* * *

Dear, patient Deni,

The trip was fine, thanks for asking. We got to Bubble 476, right before dusk and right before I was about to lose my mind in the transit elevator (which I will now and always call the claustrophobic box of doom). My ride wasn't even as long as yours. Seriously, how did you manage a ten-hour trip without murdering anyone?

Anyway, the reason I didn't write promptly is because I'm part of a team here,

Deni, and apparently this team had a lot of shit to carry inside before it got completely dark. You'll be surprised how much equipment they managed to pack into that tiny elevator. My arms are aching and I was going to just pass out and send you a message tomorrow. But I'm enduring, for you because I'm a good friend.

That and the modified WiFi is terrible here. So, I don't know if it'll be working in the morning.

How's your glamorous life in Bubble 25?

Miss you already,

Geo

* * *

To: Geo Torres

From: Deni Cohen

Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2032, 10:18 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Define "Glamor"

* * *

Dear Geo,

That settles it. I'm never worrying about you again. Enjoy the last dregs of my concern, Torres.

The elevator is def the worst part of the whole thing. Tell me what your Bubble's like. Put that MFA to use and be descriptive. Anything gotta be better than a sterile space station that's completely void of culture. Seriously, unreliable WiFi? What backwater, shitty pocket universe did you sign up for, dude? Doesn't half of your analysis equipment need the internet to actually run?

Anyway, glamor is relative.

Like you would think being an astronomer on a space station in a bubble universe is cool, right?

Not when there's like 150 researchers fighting for observation time on two telescopes. And you get priority in the queue by having promising findings. "Bubble worlds = opportunities!" Can't believe I fell for that propaganda.

On the bright side, the cafeteria meals are finally getting better. The food scientists NextEarth Inc. hired two months ago have figured out how to use the kitchen lab on the lower decks. I had the lab-grown salmon today. I haven't had salmon for YEARS. Probably not since your birthday at the Fish Tank, like in 2024? It tasted almost as I remember.

The coffee here is still shit, though. I'm strongly considering giving it up and becoming a tea drinker. But according to my friend on the pulsar team tea doesn't taste great either. Ugh.

Why do you think someone would build an entire space station and then abandon it?

Cheers,

Deni

P.S. Glad you're okay. I guess.

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2032, 19:37 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—The Run Down

* * *

Deni,

First, I'm sorry that your research isn't producing good results yet. That telescope queue sounds totally unfair.

Second, do not whine to me about your fancy protein options. If I want anything that

resembles a salmon here, I need to catch one of the sand fish that skim the dunes. I haven't tried one yet, but I'm told they taste less like tilapia and more like game-y boar.

Honestly, this Bubble is super weird. It looks like classic pictures of the Sahara, endless sand dunes and gradient colors and all, but the sand is vibrant purple and there're more rocks. It looks devoid.

But . . .

But if you dig down, like a meter, it's teeming with life. Or something like life. We have yet to find a water source. (Look at me using "we" already, as though I'm a team player or something.) And by "we" I mean the dozen or so biologists and geologists I'm working with. I'm just a glorified note taker, following the scientists around like a puppy with a handheld.

That's the question for the ages, isn't it? Who built the empty space stations, cities, and candy manufacturing plant? (Yeah, according to [this article](#), the candy one is a new discovery physicists made last week. Predictably named Bubble 512.)

Whoever built this research compound needed water too, because there were half-full tanks and taps and sinks when the first researchers arrived.

You'll be proud of me—I've been eating meals with my team. I don't say much (per usual), but I've been enjoying their conversations. The scientists that have been here a while indicate that they've seen some strange life forms. I might have to give up writing mystery thrillers and go full sci-fi, if half of this stuff is true. Like, everyone says time is weird here, but I'm not sure what they mean by that. Maybe the time zones keep shifting? But I haven't seen evidence of this yet. Maybe it's subtle.

I miss you too. Being here with all these strangers makes me realize that I have to *talk* to them to make new friends. I'm shit at talking. Also, shit at making friends. Would it be too weird to send a team-wide email explaining that I'm not being an asshole, I just prefer writing to talking?

Tell me something crazy in your next email. Sad, funny, I don't care. Send me emotion, so I don't have to stew in my own.

Love,
Geo

P.S. Maybe your predecessors abandoned the space station because the coffee was shit.

* * *

To: Geo Torres
From: Deni Cohen
Sent: Monday, April 26, 2032, 1:54 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—The Confession

* * *

Dear Geo,

Screw you, and your need for human emotion. Why can't you just be an over-worked, stressed out corporate droid like the rest of us????

Did I mention my project is not going well? I need telescope time. But I can't get telescope time because my exoplanet research is not producing enough promising data to justify bumping me up on the queue, and if I don't produce results, then NextEarth doesn't have a reason to keep paying me, and I'll be back, sitting in our regular universe, sending out my resume dozens of times a day, eating canned soup and omelets, praying for a steady job. Except you wouldn't be there this time. Because you'd still be working in Bubble 476.

Ugh, I was so excited about coming to this Bubble. I'm supposed to be helping find humanity's next home.

Instead, I'm stressed and homesick. I miss the random theater skits at Eco Park and the pop up art at the EV charging plazas we used to go to. All people here ever

talk about is their exoplanet research. Everyone seems to be getting better results than me, too.

I've been thinking about the past a lot today.

Probably because I was clearing up some space on my memory drive last night and going through old pics and recs. Holy crap, man, we took a lot of pics of food. I think we documented every time we ate curry on your dorm room floor. We were such weirdos. Actually, that's what we were eating when the news about Bubble 1 broke, and I only remember that because we stopped mid-bite to look at each other and wonder who the hell would want to live in a perfect but empty universe?

Also, I came across a video of Terry right before he got engaged to Yuma. It was weird rewatching it. He was saying, "She's the one, I've finally found her." And the belief was so plain on his face, almost radiating from him.

Except, I'm watching this video ten years later, with the knowledge that they divorced four years ago.

Makes me wonder if anything lasts.

You said you wanted human emotion, Geo. HOW DO YOU LIKE ME NOW????

Write back soon, please,

Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Wednesday, April 28, 2032, 1:54 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Condolences and Progress

* * *

Dear Deni,

All human emotion is welcome, even if it's *fucking depressing*. Don't worry, though, you are never going to eat omelets and pasta without me. Seriously, sending all the virtual hugs that can fit in this email. You'll figure it out, you always do. You're working for a competitive company in one of the most sought after Bubbles. You inspired me to apply to Bubble jobs too, even though my options were never as cool as yours. You'll get a break in your research. I know you will.

I wish I could tell you some thrilling adventure tale of my life in the purple desert Bubble, but alas, my two main jobs here are taking the scientists' scrawled notes and turning them into readable reports, and watching the camera robot's feed for any interesting footage of the wildlife under the sands. Footage is rare because creatures here are shy. My favorite one, though, is the ten-legged, amoeba shaped fuzball that eats the sand fish.

So, basically, I don't have an excuse not to write. Except the normal ones, like being tired or under-caffeinated or over-caffeinated. Still, I'm persevering, I got three chapters done this week on my romance/thriller/comic novel and outlined four more. It's the most progress I've had in months.

I didn't realize it, but one of the geologists was reading over my shoulder yesterday as I was writing at lunch. They wanted to know more about the story after reading some. But they also did that thing where their eyes went slightly wide first as they realized that yes, I do have a voice.

"You never say more than two words at a time," they said. They seemed a little embarrassed even as they said this, so I'm not holding it against them. This time. You'll be proud of me, Deni. I didn't roll my eyes.

I'm attaching chapters 1-3 because hopefully it'll cheer you up. Also, it'll stop me from picking at the words like a scab.

Hang in there,

Geo

March/April 2021

P.S. I read [this article](#) today about how 94 percent of pocket universes discovered are too unstable to explore and/or collapse immediately after discovery. What if we lost our only chance of going to an abandoned art museum?

* * *

To: Geo Torres
From: Deni Cohen
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2032, 22:21 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Progress is Relative

* * *

Dear Geo,

Jealous of your productivity, but I'm going to be a good friend and pretend to be happy for you.

Just kidding, your ploy to cheer me up via novel is working. I'm already completely invested in your priest/cat burglar/astrophysicist trio. Keep sending me new chapters as you write them!

Speaking of bright spots, I got to witness a supernova today, so that was pretty cool. The deceased star in question was nine thousand light-years away from us. So we're safe. It's the first supernova that modern astronomers have ever observed, so that's pretty awesome. In the explosion's aftermath, a new nebula will form. But right now, it looks like there's a small, bright polka dot among the stars.

. . . which also means that all the researchers studying sections in that area are screwed. Which means it frees up lots of telescope time for other researchers. Like me. I have every data collection algorithm set up and teamed up with two other people in my department. So, hopefully, between the three of us, we can find some meaningful results.

Send pictures of the fuzzy amoebas stat!

Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
From: Geo Torres
Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2032, 1:54 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—YESSSSSS

* * *

Dear Deni,

I don't want to start this off by saying I told you so, but definitely told you soon. I knew you were going to figure it out and stay on Bubble 25 way longer than I'm going to be employed here. So happy your research had a breakthrough. Well done!

In contrast, the highlight of my day was discovering a new species on the robot's trap cameras. It looks like a two-legged lizard with a tadpole tail. It only comes out when it's alone. The team has affectionately started calling it the Torres amphibian.

Told you so!

Geo

P.S. Attached are chapters 7-9.

* * *

To: Geo Torres
From: Deni Cohen
Sent: Friday, April 30, 2032, 3:33 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—WTF?

* * *

Geo,

What the hell are you talking about, dude? I mean my preliminary data looks

promising, but I think it's too early to celebrate. Are you sure you meant to send this email to me???

Confused, but still love you,
Deni

P.S. Congrats on having a lizard named after you. Send a picture of that, too!

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
From: Geo Torres
Sent: Saturday, May 1, 2032, 11:08 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Time is a Flat Circle

* * *

Deni,

Huh. I guess time is weird here. I didn't write that email—yet. Tragically, the attachment for chapter 7-9 won't open for me, so I can't copy what future me wrote already, alas.

Just . . . don't freak out. My mom got an email dated May 15th from me and is completely spooked. She hasn't written in three days.

Time change shouldn't affect us, though, right? Us weirdos need to stick together. And while you'll be happy to hear that I've made some new friends here, they don't fill the Deni-shaped hole in my life.

Please, just keep writing normally, okay? And I'll start quoting your questions. And hopefully we won't get hopelessly confused?

Here's chapters 4-6.

Love,
Geo

* * *

To: Geo Torres
From: Deni Cohen
Sent: Saturday, May 1, 2032, 19:42 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—I repeat, WTF?

* * *

Dear Geo,

I've been reading up on time anomalies in other pocket universes and it sounds like even if people know what's coming, they can't do anything to change it.

Our friendship means the world to me, but I'm not sure how I feel about this prophetic shit. What if you tell me that I'm going to lose my right arm in a freak accident next week or something???

I'll keep writing as long as you don't tell me anything bad.

In my Bubble, there have been three more supernovas. All in the same arm of the Galaxy. The team studying supernovas are beside themselves. But the additional light is drowning out a lot in that section of space. Suddenly, I've got more telescope time this week than I've had in the last month.

Won't lie, your futuristic email made me excited for the results.

Don't ruin the ending,
Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
From: Geo Torres
Sent: Monday, May 3, 2032, 12:52 GMT
Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Waiting

* * *

March/April 2021

Dear Deni,

“What if you tell me that I’m going to lose my right arm in a freak accident next week or something?”

I don’t know anything about the fate of your right arm. Your left arm, though . . .
Just kidding.

My namesake lizard has yet to appear and I’m waiting impatiently for it. The modified WiFi was down all of yesterday because of a sandstorm, so I got a lot of writing done. I don’t think I could spoil anything actually, except maybe for the ending of my book. The day-to-day life in this Bubble doesn’t change much.

Speaking of spoilers . . . how’s the research going?

—G

* * *

To: Geo Torres

From: Deni Cohen

Sent: Tuesday, May 4, 2032, 6:45 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—You told me so

* * *

Dear Geo,

Don’t even know why I’m bothering to tell you this. But for the sake of friendship and continuity and avoiding paradoxes, we *might* have found some Earth-like planets. Their periods suggest they’re in the habitable zone. Plus their density suggests they’re the right size so their gravity wouldn’t be too different from our own. Real findings! Ones that NextEarth can capitalize on. Omg, Geo, I’m so relieved.

Celebrating tonight by watching live concert recs and eating canned soup and pasta. For nostalgia and also because I’m tired of salmon.

Really wish you were here to celebrate with me.

—Deni

P.S. I want to know what happens next to your trio of characters. Send chapter 10 already, dude.

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Wednesday, May 19, 2032, 5:11 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Regrets

* * *

Hi Deni,

I’ve been trying to send this email for the last four hours, hitting send over and over again until the WiFi lasted long enough for the message to go through. Hope you get this. Eventually.

I’m glad you told me to pack a go bag because we haven’t been able to return to the main area of the compound for about twenty-four hours. No one wants to risk going out in the sandstorm, which looks like something from a nightmare and sounds like a scream. The swirling sand will literally skin us alive, as we discovered when one of the biologists stuck his finger out in it.

“What are you going to do?”

I don’t know, Deni, I really don’t.

Despite it all, I’ve been writing. Which is a crazy thing to do when the world outside feels like it’s tearing itself apart. But it’s the only thing I can do against the darkness and my growing despair. And I don’t want to leave you with an unfinished story.

Attached are chapters 18-21. Which might be my best work to date.

Hope you’re still safe.

—Geo

To: Deni Cohen
 From: Geo Torres
 Sent: Wednesday, May 5, 2032, 22:45 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Spotted

* * *

Deni,

The Torres amphibian made another appearance today! It came close enough to the camera that we could see that its body was covered in green, orange, and red spots. It inched closer and closer. Then it stole the trap camera off the bot and ran off with it. Everyone laughed for ten solid minutes.

I'm so proud.

Will send the next chapters soon. Also, did you read how economists are predicting the end of the Long Recession?

—G

* * *

To: Geo Torres
 From: Deni Cohen
 Sent: Thursday, May 6, 2032, 6:45 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—About the future

* * *

Dear Geo,

Seriously debated whether to include the email I got from you (dated May 19th) in this chain, because if we can't change what's going to happen, is it worth stressing you out over it? Then I figure it's a few weeks out and if it helps you prepare for what's coming, well . . .

Is this what you want me to do?

According to your future email, I'm supposed to tell you to pack a go bag, so here I am telling you to do that stat. Make sure to put extra layers and external batteries along with your toothbrush.

But maybe you should just quit this job? Go back home. I know you need this job as badly as I do, but something seems . . . off. Like all those scare articles about all Bubble universes being unstable. I don't know. Maybe my anxiety is just acting up again.

There were four more supernovas today. One as close as four hundred light-years. Some supergiants as close as 150 light-years are beginning to expand and contract rapidly. The death throes of a star.

It's cool. But it's also making us nervous. A supernova as close as fifty light-years will eradicate life on the station because of the ridiculous amounts of neutrinos they release.

No one knows why so many stars are dying so suddenly. It hasn't affected my research sector yet, so I'm still okay. But I can't help thinking it's only a matter of time.

If I left my Bubble, would you maybe follow my lead again and leave yours, too?

Or am I just being paranoid????

Ugh, I have no idea anymore.

Love,

Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
 From: Geo Torres
 Sent: Sunday, May 9, 2032, 12:52 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Warnings Appreciated

* * *

March/April 2021

Dearest Deni,

Sorry about the delay. The WiFi has been shit here recently.

“Is this what you’d like me to do?”

Yes. Thanks for warning me. I mean that seriously. And yes, you should definitely include all the emails I send you from the future because I don’t want you to stress out about it alone.

“If I left my Bubble, would you maybe follow my lead again and leave yours, too?”

Consider it? I officially gave my two-week notice today. My boss took it pretty well. Apparently, I’m not the only one that’s been seeing their emails from the future. Most of the team is either leaving or seriously considering it. I mean, student debt fucking sucks, but no one actually wants to risk their life over it. It’s not worth it. There wasn’t much conversation to listen to at dinner today.

But . . .

If I’m going to be stuck in a sandstorm in a few weeks, at least it won’t be because I didn’t try.

Now it’s my turn to give some human emotion. Here’s chapters 12-14. All I ask is for some good news in return.

Love,

Geo

* * *

To: Geo Torres

From: Deni Cohen

Sent: Monday, May 10, 2032, 20:24 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Relocation plans

* * *

Dear Geo,

Good news is rare here, too. Everything feels unstable. Did some research today and it looks like a bunch of other Bubbles are experiencing weird natural phenomena.

There’s serious talk of people leaving the station. But I think most of us are going to hold out a little longer. The potential acclaim/satisfaction of finding the next Earth is too tempting. Also, people are scared about trying to find a new job in the Long Recession back home.

I guess the only good news is that the food scientists are upping their game. The lab-grown duck is on point and I usually don’t even like meat.

Seriously though, I’m worried. I’m checking to see if our old apartment is vacant again. We should both probably have a place to live when we end up back home. Good roommates are a pain in the ass to find, so I’m settling for you and putting your name on the lease.

Love,

Deni

* * *

To: Geo Torres

From: Deni Cohen

Sent: Saturday, May 15, 2032, 3:03 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—You’re still alive, right?

* * *

Dear Geo,

Okay, so I know I said I wouldn’t worry about you ever again, but I lied, Torres, okay? I haven’t got any emails from your past, future, or present in five days. So please send something, even if it’s just a pic of purple sands.

Things aren’t great here. More than 50 percent of the stars we’re observing are in their death throes, and some of them shouldn’t even be massive or evolved enough to

go supernova. No one's saying it, but it's only a matter of time before neutrinos and radiation from one of these explosions is going to damage the station. Also us.

NextEarth's started evacuating nonessential personnel while dozens of engineers and scientists are trying to make modifications to the station to allow us to cram in a little more research. Because my research looks so promising, I'm now considered an "essential."

And you said irony was dead, Geo.

Love.

Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Sunday, May 16, 2032, 12:52 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—WiFi is Terrible, Also Sandstorms

* * *

Dearest Deni,

Sorry for making you wait. I appreciate your email, even though it's *super* worry-inducing and the worst. It sucks that your hard work is paying off like this, versus a slacker like me who is going home next week. I wish I had something to cheer you up, but I've got nothing.

Again, sorry for scaring you with my lagging replies. The modified WiFi is barely working anymore, and the frequency/growing intensity of these sandstorms is definitely not helping.

That's not the worst of it, either. Remember how I told you that under the dunes, there's a whole ecosystem of life? It's gone. Everything. The fuzz amoeba, the Torres amphibian, the sand fish. Like they were never there at all.

Everyone on the team has requested to leave this Bubble. HR and emergency services haven't responded yet with an updated schedule of the claustrophobic boxes of doom, so we're waiting. We're hoping that the lack of response is just because of the shitty WiFi or because time is being weird again.

Just a warning, though, it might be a few days until my next email. Another big storm is brewing out past the dunes, dark and huge on the horizon. You'll be proud of me—I took your advice and packed my go bag with extra batteries. Maybe I won't need them. Maybe our little compound will endure, and we'll be able to unbury ourselves when it's over. Maybe I'll make fun of you worrying about me in my next email.

I'm sending you chapters 15-17. Honestly, it's not my best work. Instead, consider it my prayer that when this blows over, I'll send you something even better. These shitty chapters aren't going to be the last thing you read by me, Deni.

Love, always,

Geo

P.S. Here's another prayer. Let me know what you find out about our old apartment.

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Saturday, May 22, 2032, 11:11 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Done and hoping

* * *

Deni,

We made it through another storm! But holy shit, we could barely get the compound's door opened, the sand was that high. None of the team is saying it, but we all are wondering what happens if the claustrophobic box comes and mistakes us for a sand dune.

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I know you'll do it anyway, but please don't worry too much, Deni. We'll figure it out, you and me. We always do, right?

I do have a bit of good news. Ironically, I was super productive during that storm, despite my keyboard being a sandy, gritty mess. Attached are the final chapters of my novel!

And, in exchange, you're going to tell me what you think about the ending next time we meet in person, which hopefully, will be very, very soon.

Hoping,
Geo

* * *

To: Deni Cohen

From: Geo Torres

Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2032, 18:16 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Sand Everywhere

* * *

Dear Deni,

Have I complained about these sandstorms yet? I don't think so, but honestly they were bearable up to now. Up to now, the compound was pretty airtight. But there must be a leak or something because purple sand coats *everything*. Even my fingers as I type this.

It feels like we're being swallowed up by a wave. Sometimes I wonder if we came to this universe during a low tide. Like, maybe the sand fish knew this was coming, and that's why they disappeared. Where do fish go in a storm?

Hilariously, I'm still writing, despite or in spite of it all. I'll have chapters 18-21 to you soon.

Any word on our apartment? I need something to look forward to.

Love,
Geo

* * *

To: Geo Torres

From: Deni Cohen

Sent: Monday, May 17, 2032, 17:02 GMT

Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Leave ASAP

* * *

Geo,

Those storms sound completely terrifying. What are you going to do?

In case you haven't seen the news, it's not just our Bubbles that are having problems. All the Bubble universes have become unstable. Every single transit elevator is in constant use for evacuations.

My research is pretty much pointless now, so I've stopped. But instead of worrying, I've sent about a dozen emails to your HR department on your team's behalf and forwarded all your futuristic emails to emergency services, so they have a weather forecast.

Leave as soon as they get there.

I've also been working with the engineers on boosting the strength of the station's magnetic field. It'll do shit against the neutrinos but it should help against the radiation.

Oh, and I'm definitely not looking at the stars anymore. No point, it'll just stress me out. Instead, I'm savoring the last few chapters of your novel.

Aren't you proud of me, Geo? I'm trying to be less worried. More proactive. More like you.

Hoping to see you very, very, very soon.
Love,
Deni

P.S. Got our old apartment leased again. Who knew I'd ever be so happy to live in that dump again????

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
 From: Geo Torres
 Sent: Sunday, May 23, 2032, 12:52 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—So much

* * *

Deni,

We're caught in another sandstorm. A big one that came so fast on the heels of the last one, we couldn't prepare properly for it.

I'm scared, Deni. There's so much I haven't done. So many stories I haven't told yet. I want to hope, but . . .

You should know I never regretted a moment I spent with you. Or all the mediocre omelets and soups and pasta we ate together in that run-down apartment. I don't regret coming to Bubble 476.

When you get home, splurge on curry. For me. I'll join you, whether I'm there or not.

I love you, always,
 Geo

* * *

To: Geo Torres
 From: Deni Cohen
 Sent: Saturday, May 22, 2032, 0:36 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—Please, please, please respond.

* * *

Dear Geo,

You always tell me not to worry but you're making it really hard, you know? Your last email sounded like you were saying goodbye and I refuse to accept that. Do you understand?

They're completely evacuating my Bubble now. The transit elevator operators are cramming as many people as they can fit each time they come. I'm leaving on the next lift but every minute feels like ages and I'm trying not to check my email every 5 seconds—hoping to get a reply from you. Trying and failing.

I think I know why this space station was abandoned. It wasn't built to last.

I'm not giving up on you, Geo. When I get home, I'm moving right back into our apartment. There'll be a key in the crack in the wall, like always, and cartons of curry waiting for you every day until you come back.

Just please, please, please write back.

Love you, always,
 Deni

* * *

To: Deni Cohen
 From: Geo Torres
 Sent: Friday, May 21, 2032, 2:02 GMT
 Subject: Re: Bubble 476—It's going to be okay

* * *

Deni,

I have thirty seconds to write this before the WiFi dies again but I want to let you know I'm okay. I think we'll be okay.

Always,
 Geo