Greetings from Dots

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My skinny fingers, those of an old man, are trembling as I open the envelope. A firm sheet of paper falls out. On the paper, there are Braille dots. My almost blind eyes are trying in vain to do something with them. The nurse reads the address to me: „ Fam. Sunday. 22, Wood Street “. This place is not far from the retirement home in which I live. But who should ever write me?

On the radio, a reporter advertised an activity: Children writing letters to old people who, due to the present Covid-19 crisis cannot receive visitors.

Carefully, my fingers are fumbling across the first line as if the dots could crack. „Hello“, I decipher. Clumsily, I continue reading:

„Before Covid-19, we had Braille at school. A blind couple was in our classroom. To try out Braille ourselves, we got Braillers and alphabets. Finally, our teacher asked who would be interested in practicing more, taking a Brailler home. I said “yes” immediately.

Then came this virus and now, I’m at home. Braille is great and easy to learn. A blind French man called Louis Braille invented the System, the couple explained. Our teacher said that many people get visually impaired or blind when they grow old. Does one of you know Braille? If this is so, please write back – in Braille if you can!

Greetings from Dots.

My head is aching, but after an eternity, I have managed to read the letter. Some years ago, a teacher tried with a patience of a saint to teach me Braille. I resisted, trying to read it with my poor remaining eyesight. At last, I gave up – until today.

Unfolding the letter, the little girl with tiny braids starts reading the Braille dots with her eyes:

“Hello Dots, thank you for your letter. I still have difficulty reading and writing Braille. Thus, I’m curious. What is your age?

Greetings from Ha-Ri.”

„Hi Ha-Ri! Thanks for writing me. I’m already quite fast on the Brailler. I’m nine years and 299 days. How old are you?

Greetings from Dots.

P.S.: How can you do a smiley in Braille?”

„Hello Dots, my fingers get more trained day by day, in reading and writing. My eyes are almost blind. I still must look up some letters in the alphabet. I am 91!

Greetings from Ha-Ri.

P.S.: I cannot braille a smiley either, but here it comes flying to you in thought.”

„Hi Ha-Ri! Funny name! Mum is mighty glad we write to each other. That’s keeping me busy, she says. Nobody can read our letters except the two of us!

Greetings from Dots.”

“Hello Dots, it’s a pity that we are no relatives. Have you got grandparents or great-grandparents? Unfortunately, I haven’t got any great-grandchildren.

Greetings from Ha-Ri.”

“Hi Ha-Ri! Have you got a picture of yourself? If yes, will you send it to me? I’ll describe you how I look like: I’m small, blonde and I’ve got tiny braids. If you want to know more, please write!

Greetings from Dots.”

“Hello Dots, you are certainly pretty. I have a picture of you before my inner eye. I haven’t got a picture of myself but an older one of my daughter. Sadly enough, she does not live any more. I will include her photograph in the letter. My daughter was beautiful, intelligent, and blonde like you – with tiny braids.

Greetings from Ha-Ri.”

“Hi Ha-Ri! I tell you what: I looked at the photo when Mum came into the room. She asked: “What picture is this?” I held it out to her and explained who was on it. Suddenly, she snatched it away from me and started screaming: “No! I don’t believe it.” Then, she mumbled something about a red Mercedes and about her grandpa who was so proud of it. “His sight wasn’t good anymore”, she went on, “and then the accident ten years ago. He drove much too fast. I was pregnant with you at that time. Julia, my mother, was sitting in the car with him and was badly injured. Later, she died in hospital.” Mum cried, looking away from me.

But Ha-Ri, hang on: Are you my great-grandpa? Mum told me I haven’t got any grandparents or great-grandparents. But you can’t be blamed about the accident, can you? Somebody bumped into your car, right?

Mum wants our writing to stop at once.

Greetings from Dots.”

“Hi Ha-Ri! How are you? Please answer me! I took the Brailler down into a cellar room that nobody knows but me. One day, I’ll come and visit you. I’ll bring you a chocolate cake, OK?

Greetings from Dots.”

Two weeks later, on a Sunday morning.

The little girl with tiny braids is standing outside before the house. She closes her eyes, listening to a black bird’s song, feeling the sun on her tender face. A lady rushes towards her. “Sunday family?”, she asks, “Are you Dots? I don’t know your real name. I’m Angela Smith, nurse in the retirement home on Park Avenue. I should give this to you from Hans-Richard Berger.” “Ha-Ri?”, the girl opens her eyes. “How is he? Why hasn’t he answered my letter? Is something wrong with him?” “I’m very sorry”, Mrs. Smith replies, passing the child an envelope. “He died last night. Well, I have to keep going.” “Annika”, Mum’s voice calls from the kitchen window. Without answering, the girl runs into her cellar room. She does not need to turn on the light because she prefers reading Braille with her fingers. Her hands are trembling as she opens the envelope. They are touching a necklace with fine pearls, then a firm sheet of paper with Braille dots.

“Hello Dots, we thank Louis Braille for his great invention. But most of all, I’d like to thank Braille and you for getting to know my great-grandchild.

The necklace belonged to Julia. Now, you should wear it.

Greetings from Ha-Ri.”