

*Dear Indy,*

*I don't know where to begin with this, so I'll just get going. We don't have much time after all. It's strange to be writing you a book that you won't be able to read for quite some time, but I'm writing this for your future. I'm not sure how old you will be when you read this, but you aren't quite ready for it. It's 2020 and you just turned nine. I have a few reasons for writing this book. The first is that I want you to know that I cared deeply about your future. I brought you into this world, and I feel it's my duty to do all I can to protect you in the present, and to ensure that I don't bequeath to you a planet spiralling out of control. I also want you to know that I tried my best to do all I could to avert the catastrophe rapidly unfolding around us. You won't see it happening around you. It's quite possible to not notice it, but you have to really try nowadays. Many people seem to be doing quite a good job of ignoring the situation. Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever way you look at it, your dad cannot ignore it. The thought of what my generation, and those before us have done to cause this disaster consumes me. It's not possible for me to just carry on as normal and drive us closer to the precipice. You must know that there is something not quite right because you hear mummy and daddy talking about climate change, ecological disaster, societal breakdown, climate refugees, and the sixth extinction. You don't understand what all these words mean, and even if you did, you wouldn't be able to grasp just how severe our situation is. I'm sure that many adults are not sure how dire our predicament is either. I hope that's the case, because if it isn't, then it means they know, and just don't care. I have too much faith in humanity to allow myself to believe that to be true. That brings me to the second reason for writing this book. I hope that by putting all my thoughts down on paper and by including all the facts, other people like me, might also start to worry about the multiple threats we currently face. More importantly than worrying, I hope that other parents will start to act in a manner appropriate for the disastrous situation our collective action has caused.*

*I want you to know what the scientists were telling us. They told us that if we did not act immediately, then our children's futures would be damaged irreparably. They warned us that there would be no second chance, no magic bullet, no Spidey was coming to save us. They told us we only had a few years left to get moving. The race has begun and by the time you read this, you will know whether we got going or whether we buried our heads in the sand and sold your future so we could carry on enjoying the present. Let me briefly introduce you to the world that was around us in 2020, when you were nine years old.*

*Wildfires raged around the globe, record temperatures were recorded on every continent with tens of thousands of resulting deaths, the sea is washing away Pacific islands, cities are flooded at high tide, super strength storms batter coastlines, shake skyscrapers, and flood farmland and cities. Record cold snaps kill tens of thousands, bats drop from the sky, wildlife is wiped out at up to 10,000 times the normal rate, insects disappear along with earth worms and our soil is only good for another 60 harvests (1). 100 million people are without a home around the world. In the world's richest nation, 650,000 people are homeless (2), but there are 18.9 million vacant houses (3). There are 300,000 people without a place to live in the U.K. (4), yet there are 216,000 empty homes (5). Ecosystems are dying, and yet we are encouraged to shop till we drop to keep the economy going. In the United States, the richest 0.1% earn more than 188 times as much as the bottom 90%, and poverty has remained stable while the income of the top 1% has doubled. The concentration of wealth is as high*

*as it was during the 1929 stock market crash (6). Just 8 men now have the same wealth as the poorest 50% of humans on planet Earth (7). Almost 700 million people do not have enough food to eat, while 40% of food in the United States is thrown away. The average American has \$90,460 worth of debt while the richest American has almost \$200 billion to spend on space travel (8). Only 1% of consumer items remain in use after six months (9), and the rest ends up buried under the Earth or discarded as 12.7 million tonnes of plastic at sea (10). More people die from overeating than undereating (11). 25,000 humans die from starvation every day, while 70 billion farm animals consume 36% of the world's crops (12). The richest plan on escaping Earth to terraform Mars rather than preserve our beautiful home. This is the world in 2021, and everything I've listed above is happening now. In the following pages, I will explain to you how they are all interrelated.*

*Many people will say that this is hyperbole, that the situation isn't as bad as the scientists are making out. Some even believe that the climate crisis is a hoax and that climate scientists are all involved in a conspiracy to overthrow capitalism. If you are one of these people, I feel sorry for you. To experience life on a ball of rock floating around a burning star, thinking that everyone around you is a liar must not be very enjoyable. If you are one of these people, go straight to page 490 and read that section before you start the book. If you read this and still aren't convinced, this book probably isn't for you. I will make no effort to prove the legitimacy of the scientific evidence. I am not a scientist after all. I'm an English teacher who happened by chance to watch Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth' in 2007, and slowly over the next thirteen years, as I learned more and more about our perilous situation, I decided I had to focus my attention on this crisis. After you were born Indy, my focus intensified, and I felt I had to work harder on the problem. At times, I feel, like many I assume, that I'm too powerless to affect change. I overcome this simply by asking myself what the alternative of action is, and what will the outcome of inaction be. I also realize that ignoring the problems we face will result in those problems passing over to you. I don't think that's what a strong father would do, and it keeps me focussed. It was hard at first to speak out about the climate crisis. No one wants to talk about it. People just want to be happy, and I understand this. I want to be happy too. But, not at the expense of your future. And hell, I hope you will know that I am happy. I love spending time with you and your mammy. I love spending time with my friends. I love playing Indiana Jones and Lego Star Wars with you, Spiderman not so much. I love throwing a ball at you. I love smacking the inflatable ball at your head in the pool as you laugh out loud. I love watching the cats fight. I love watching Odie (our dog) chase our five cat friends around the house. I love watching our bigger and more jealous dog, Lara, bully Odie. I love being outside. I love camping. I love surfing. I love reading. All of these things make me happy. Being alive is amazing. I've been lucky enough to have lived in the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and Japan. I have swum with dolphins and sharks, walked through beautiful forests, swum in crystal clear lakes and rivers. Our planet is paradise. Unfortunately, it won't be paradise for much longer. In fact, it already isn't paradise for hundreds of millions of people, and tens of billions of non-human animals.*

*In the following pages, I will attempt to get you to understand why I am inextricably worried for your future. I will explain the multiple threats we face from the climate crisis, the rising temperatures, the rising seas, the vanishing fresh water, the threat of mass starvation, the refugee moral dilemma and the future wars. I will inform you of the sixth extinction and what it means for your future. I will show*

*you how we got into this mess, and finally, I will give some solutions to help get us out. I wouldn't be much of a father if I just told you all this and gave you no hope. People must think that I'm a pessimist because I choose to focus on such depressing topics. I'm actually an optimist. That's why I focus on these problems. To ignore them will only ensure that they happen. Focussing on them is the only way out of this situation. And who knows, by focussing on them, we might just be able to make a better world for you, and your children, and the generations who come behind us.*