

Dear Dorothy-Rose,

That feels such a formal way to address you given that you're only 6 months old. I don't know how old you will be when I give you this letter. I don't know when the right time will be. Or if there will even be a right time. Now feels like the right time to write. You see we're on the threshold of change. Everyone who loves you is in the process of reorientating their lives around you. It is so much fun! Your mum and I have been friends for almost 10 years. So, it was decided long ago that I will be your fun Aunty. Yet I had no idea how much fun being your Aunty was going to be. You make the world feel new because to you everything is.

Our world is far from new though. Since your mum and I were children, scientists have been warning about the climate crisis. For the longest time this felt like some far-off distant problem. Suddenly the realities are here. Not in some distant place but here on these shores. This summer, your first summer, the source of the river Thames dried up. These extreme temperatures are making me wish I had done so much more so much sooner. As are you, my little lamb. Now that you're here, there are so many things I wish I'd done earlier.

I wish I'd learned how my sewing machine worked. So, I could make the soft toys in those craft books I've had for years. I wish I'd gotten good at gardening so I would have fresh things on hand to stick in the blender for you. You're just beginning to take your first bite out of the world. I love the photos your mum sends of your face covered in yummy goodness. I wished I'd taken a baby first aid course before I met you. The world suddenly seems full of choking hazards. Learning what to do in an emergency would have been so much easier before I was able to picture your little face.

I am going to learn how to do all these things. Those plastic toys I was given as a child are still around. Piled up in landfills and washing up on shorelines. I'm not going to add to the pile. So, I'm looking forward to giving you gifts I've made you. It might not win me any fun Aunty awards as you get older and fall under the spell of 'the latest thing' but it will be a lot of fun for me. Salad grown in the garden doesn't come in plastic bags. So, learning how to garden properly will be worth the effort long after you've gotten your teeth. As you get bigger you can help me water the flowers. We can come up with silly names for them to replace the complicated Latin names which by then I will have learned. It is so much fun thinking about all the things we'll get to do together in this big new world that you're just starting to explore.

Before you were born, I did do my bit to take care of the planet. I recycled. I stopped flying. Started washing my clothes at 30 degrees. Now that you're here I want to reorientate my life so that taking care of the planet is at the centre of my life. You and I aren't flesh and blood, but we are family. I want to see you grow up. I want you to thrive. I want the best for you so I'm going to do my best for you. That means I won't always be fun Aunty K. If I'm honest, I don't think the vegan sweets that come in plastic free packaging are as nice as the sweets I grew up on but they're what you're going to get. When your mum says you can't have the latest device, I'm not going to get you one for Christmas. If these things seem unfair, please know I have a plan to make it up to you. I am going to teach you how to swear!

Properly. Not like the swearing you'll hear in the playground. I'm going to introduce you to swearing that comes from the soul. When you are old enough, and your mum says it's okay, I'm going to read you a collection of poems by Inua Ellams. Starting with a poem for humanity. It made me think of you.

Lots of love from Aunty K

Dear Humanity,

Here we stand, just as the blackberries ripen, against your monocultures.

Here, with the hills behind us, we stand firm against your soil erosion.

We lie down in the path of your vehicles that bring

Violence, destruction and threat to our

Delicate ecosystem.

We will not meet violence with violence, nor hate with

Hate. We will resist, in our tiny trembling

Boldness, and raise our heads in every

Path you tread.

Each border you try to plant will be

Transformed by biodiversity and to counter fear we

Will put down our roots.

At our feet there will be a sanctuary for many; dandelions and thistles, clover, field pansy and

Sorrel.

We will teach deadnettles passive resistance and the

Buttercups will paint our placards yellow with the

Sun's cheerful hope.

We have hope that you will join us one day, sitting

Carefully amongst us and treading softly as you pass,

Knowing that we are unashamed, unafraid and

Together.

Look around you. The wild raspberries are nodding in time

With the wind. We can hear the future's song on

The scent of the honeysuckle, which joins us now and

Lingers.

Will you join us, too?

Yours Sincerely,

The Pineapple Weed

Letter to the **10%** (ADDRESSES UNKNOWN – PLEASE FORWARD)

You know who you are – the most affluent **10%** of households all over the world – responsible for **49%** of our total carbon emissions. While the least wealthy **50%** of the global population are responsible for just **7%**.

If you're interested, here in the UK the least well-off **50%** uses under **20%** of available energy, which is less than the total amount consumed by the top **5%**.

The figures speak for themselves. Here are some more: Over **50%** of emissions from passenger aviation are produced by the **1%** who fly most often.

I write this after news of Shell's record quarterly profits, resulting in **£6.5bn** pay outs to shareholders. The gas firm Centrica – also a member of the FTSE **100** – is reaping massive operating profits, worth **£59m** to shareholders. Meanwhile, everyone I know is worried about fuel bills, the rising cost of petrol and food and the safety of the planet.

All the numbers add up to excess, inequality and bad news for us and the earth. **Net Zero** is a fantasy unless the books balance. The future will not bear fruit.

Long-term, none of your millions will protect you or your children from the effects of **40°C** temperatures – drought and poor harvests, wildfires, infrastructure collapse and rising sea levels.

Although only **4%** of the Conservative Party membership consider Climate Change to be a pressing issue, according to the latest IPCC report, to keep global temperature rise under **1.5°C** means that carbon emissions from everything we do, buy, use or eat must peak by **2025**, and fall rapidly after that, reaching **Net Zero** by **2050**. The total amount of **CO²** the world has emitted in the last decade is the same amount left to us now for the next **3** years to stay under this key threshold and ensure a sustainable future.

Can you live with the consequences of looking away and doing nothing? For the sake of the world's children, are you ready to show us what you think their future is worth?

It would cost you so little and change so much. You are the **10%** who could make **100%** difference to climate justice.

Yours,

1 of **63%** of the UK population who lives on **15** times less in a year than you'd spend on just **1** of your cars.

To my Granddaughter, Pearl

My dear Pearl,

I'd like to tell you a story.

*

Once there was a lady who told a naughty lie. She said, *there's no such thing as society, only lots of different people who must all take care of themselves.*

Silly things are said all the time, of course, and mostly it doesn't matter much, but this lie was powerful, like a magic spell. Many people were fooled by it. They went around grabbing as much as they could for themselves, without caring about anyone else or for this lovely world we live in. They thought that if they had a great big house, a fancy car, and loads of money in the bank, they would be as happy as can be. Even the people who write the newspapers believed the lie, and they made up stories about it every day to show how clever they were.

Some people were good at grabbing and became very rich. But no matter how much they had, they always wanted more. Others got poorer and poorer and didn't have enough to eat, because the rich people had taken everything, and there was nothing left for them. Even the planet we live on got very sick, because so many precious things had been taken away from it.

But the newspapers still told stories about how the rich people were strong and the poor people must be very weak and stupid, otherwise they would have more money. They also said there was nothing wrong with the planet, it was just pretending to be hot and sick....

*

Now the problem with this story is that it doesn't have a proper ending yet. I hope one day people will stop believing the lie and there will be a nice happy ending. But if this happens, it might be years from now when you're grown up and I'm not here anymore to see it.

So until then, live kindly and try not to look for happiness in the wrong places.

Love

Grandad Alex

Oakhill Road, Sheffield
17 August 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

This is an emergency. This is no time for party politics – that time has gone.

When the temperature in Sheffield reached 38 degrees, I felt dismay as my potato plants keeled over in the sun. The spuds will be small this year because, although I've watered, the soil is dry – it needs rain. I'm thinking about the people in the horn of Africa, facing famine – AGAIN. Thinking about people across the world losing their homes, their land, their lives, to fire and flood.

Place the palm of your hand on your heart. Can you feel it beating there? Hopefully rhythmically? The earth needs balance, a steady heartbeat. Instead she is becoming more and more agitated as the heat trapped over her surface intensifies, as winds tear across her, as her ice caps melt and her oceans rise.

Listen: to the bees, to the scientists, to the people offering green solutions, to the voices of people like Anita Chitaya, from Bwabwa, Malawi.*

Imagine being the prime minister remembered for taking us back from the brink.

Now go for it. Work cross party, enlist help, appoint people who know, understand, care. Work collaboratively, collegially, internationally. Close down the coal mines, switch off the gas taps, use the sun, the wind, the sea. Adapt, train, educate, send out thousands of insulators, retrofitters, turbine builders. Embrace a new economics based on fairness, justice, a decent basic life for all. Ditch our country's nuclear weapons, send that money to peoples battling the effects of climate change.

It might be that humans have had their time. The earth will carry on. Without humans other species will have more of a chance. But it's still possible for us to continue to be part of life on this extraordinary planet.

Please choose life.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Rowlands
Rachel Rowlands

*Anita Chitaya is a Malawian teacher, activist, farmer, mother and community leader who narrates the documentary film 'The Ants and the Grasshopper'.

To:

- a) Whom it may concern
- b) All – this concerns all of us!

Time: 5 to 12

Dear All,

It's all rubbish, isn't it? We've been toppled by piles of waste, the land is full of landfills, plastic is spreading in our seas, or at best struggling to be recycled. They use incinerators to reduce our ridiculous heaps of waste, yet our precious forests are burning faster. And we, what do we do? Carry on regardless, for the most part, holding on to the consumer society that's killing us, and the earth on which we live.

We still don't seem to realise how much we have taken to living dangerously. Even after a landfill has been de-filled, for example, the water beneath it is still contaminated, and needs to be purified by a laborious process called 'reverse osmosis'.

Which makes me think that it is us, all of us, who are in need of some kind of 'reverse osmosis': a reversal of values, a change, a transformation deep enough to clean up our act, for our earth, ourselves and for each other.

Let this letter not be litter, not a waste but a call to action. Let this not be discarded, after all it's written on thin cardboard, and I didn't discard the storyboard either. After I wrote this on card, I keyed it into my laptop, using valuable electricity.

There's a footprint for everything, let's walk a mile in those feet – make headway, not another concrete highway, generate mental energy, make power-lines apart from the pylons. Fuel energy for change, not the fossils. Charge our own batteries instead of those of the system, which are dredging the life out of us and our earth. Go back to the fossils found in archaeology, not those of modernity.

And it's not all about going back either, it's about going differently forwards – to make a modernity for all, not one that's made for the West, and relegates the majority to the periphery. Equality and Sustainability are indivisible. We can't maintain duality when there is only one earth! We are burning, wake up and smell the fumes!

There's still beautiful birdsong out there, which you can hear through the fossil-fuelled traffic if you listen carefully, mindfully, truthfully. For in nature there is truth, more than anywhere else. So by destroying our environment, we destroy truth.

Until we end up a fake, a joke, a bitter burning irony, with no-thing, and no-truth, left. Let's reverse, before it's too late.

Yours Earthfully,

Ursula, from an eroding coastline

19th July 2022

Dear Guy Opperman,

I am writing to you, as my MP, the representative for Hexham in the House of Commons, and my first port of call when I have a political concern. I am more than concerned. I am petrified for the future, for that of my children and grandchildren. I am afraid that we are in a climate emergency and the government's response is woefully inadequate.

We know, that if we continue our current path, we risk facing collapse of life as we know it, and to quote David Attenborough, 'everything that gives us our security: food production, access to fresh water, habitable ambient temperatures, and ocean food chains'.

It is no longer enough to beg our neighbours, family members, not to fly, to give up meat, to go 'Plastic Free in July'. It is too little too late. Small measures will not deliver the major change that is needed. The time has come for systemic change, and by that, I mean effective government to tackle the crisis. You voted yesterday that you have every confidence in the government. I do not. It is failing to address the Climate Crisis.

On its launch in October 2021, the Net Zero Strategy was hailed by Boris Johnson, who said, "Our strategy for Net Zero is to lead the world in ending our contribution to climate change," and by the Secretary of State, Kwasi Kwarteng: "This strategy demonstrates how the UK is leading by example, with a clear plan for the future."

Why is it then, that as our country burns with the hottest temperatures on record, the High Court has, on 18th July, had to order the government to outline exactly how its Net Zero policies will achieve its emission targets by 2050? They have been found to be woefully inadequate. Can I ask what your reaction is to the successful legal challenge by Friends of the Earth, Client Earth and the Good Law Project against the government for failing to have a strategy? What is your response to the findings of the judge that the report placed before Parliament lacked the specificity necessary to meet the Secretary of State's duty to inform Parliament and the public of his plans?

I understand that Boris Johnson will not be Prime Minister after September, but why is the silence from the Tory candidates around the climate crisis so deafening during an unprecedented heatwave, with predictions that there will be much worse to come? I understand this was to be debated in the cancelled live broadcast, but surely, the candidates would be outlining their proposals in what is the most important issue for so many of us? Why does there appear to be a conspiracy of silence between the media and government that dominates public life? The planet is shouting at us, nay, screaming at us, but the government is not listening and is most certainly not acting.

I will be sending a copy of this letter to George Eustice, the Environment Secretary, and Kwasi Kwarteng, the Minister for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, publishing it on my website, and sending it to New Writing North and Linda France for their project, *The Climate Letters*. If you feel there is anyone else who might listen and give an adequate response, do let me know. In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you. The time is now.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Reed



DUNSTANBURGH CASTLE, NORTHUMBERLAND

Dunstanburgh Castle
© David Tarn



Dear Anne-Marie, you are my MP.

How will you save this landscape and sea?
How will you represent the climate, and me?

New homes on green sites up here, we lament
Too costly for community to buy or rent.
Not using local sheepwool for insulation,
No solar power for energy reduction.

Economy above climate crisis? Not sound.
Money does not make the world go round.

CoP26, just over the Border, too
Experts review what we must do.
Changing attitudes is what we need
Not just words, but MP's actual deeds.

Dear Anne-Marie, if you want my vote...

CLIMATE CRISIS. PLEASE TAKE NOTE!

R Jones
3/8/2022
NL6

YOURS SINCERELY

Romi Jones
Rennington Moor
Alnwick, Northumberland
NE66 3RH

IN RESPONSE TO WRITING
THE
CLIMATE

NEW WRITING NORTH

"YOURS SINCERELY.
THE CLIMATE LETTERS"

To

Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP.

MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed

203. Berwick Workspace

90. Mary gate.

Berwick-upon-Tweed.

TD15 1BN

Dear Mr Opperman,

I live in rural Northumberland. I am listening for the chatter of departing swallows on the wires outside my home, but all is quiet. This sound used to be a feature of late summer, here in my home near Allendale, where over a dozen pairs of swallows nested until just a few years ago. This year there was one, which soon disappeared. So, there is no excited conversation between parent and offspring getting ready for their flight to Africa. An incomparable piece of magic has gone. Perhaps not everywhere but as a part of a relentless decline.

If this were an isolated event, it would not matter so much, but the calls of the lapwings and curlews are fading, as are the bright colours of the once numerous butterflies on the flowering mint.

I talk about this because it is local and not news of some far distant place – and being local, it matters to me. It is a local symptom of something much larger, a planet struggling to maintain a diverse and healthy life with the changes us humans have wrought. We all know them: climate change, environmental destruction, pollution.

I am aware that you have opposed new coal mining proposals at Whittonstall and Halton Lea Gate and I salute you for this. But the truth is that the government is not serious about tackling the multiple crises affecting our country. At COP 26 in Glasgow our prime minister projected himself as a leader in curbing climate change, promising net-zero by 2050. Since then, the government has approved the Abigail oil and gas field in the North Sea, given license for a coal mine extension in Wales and ministers are talking of fast-tracking new oil and gas fields, whilst your fellow conservative back-benchers are pressurising to water down net-zero targets. Liz Truss is talking about scrapping the green levy.

It is clear that if climate change is not attended to now, the present cost of living crisis, as hideous as it is, will be dwarfed by the consequence of collapsing ecosystems with the unfathomable suffering it will bring. So why is it not centre stage in every debate?

What I ask is that you, as my constituency representative, do all you can to hold your government to account, to do more to tackle climate change, habitat loss, pollution. Please do not let ministers water down an already inadequate response. So that successive generations may have a chance to live in a tolerable world and hear the late summer chatter of swallows on the wires.

Malcolm

Dear child I do not have,

this letter is for you.

This is the story of one of us. He too was born by chance in a forest. In a hut outside the capital. Quiet people used to work over there. Where there was grass, now there is a city. And that hut in the middle of the green, where is it now?

This boy from the suburb, he enjoyed playing with me but one day he said, 'I'm going to town.' And he said it while he was crying. I asked him, 'My friend, aren't you happy? You're finally moving to live in the town. There you will find the things you didn't have here. You can wash yourself at home without going down to the river!' 'My dear friend,' he said, 'Here I was born, on this road is where I will leave my heart.' 'But how can you not understand how lucky you are? You will keep playing barefoot in the meadows while, in the city, I breathe in the concrete jungle. But there will come a day when I will return here. And I will hear the friendly train, which will bring me back. It whistles like this: *choo choo*.'

Eight long years go by. But that boy has come a long way. He doesn't forget his first home. Now with the money he has, he can buy it. He comes back and doesn't find his friends. He sees only houses on top of houses, tar and pollution. Because they keep building houses. And they don't leave any grass.

Don't worry, my dear child, you won't have this unpleasant feeling. The Portuguese call it *saudade*, the Welsh call it *hiraeth*. You see? I got an education, leaving my home and the natural world. What's it for? I spend most of my time in front of a screen, using up lots of electricity and I buy virtual money for my virtual world. It reminds me of another word, *gluggavedur*: 'window weather', an Icelandic term, which means to appreciate, behind the windows, unpleasant weather outside when it is very comfortable inside. I amuse myself with my screen. Even if the world outside collapses every day, it is fine, because we all are inside, watching our screens.

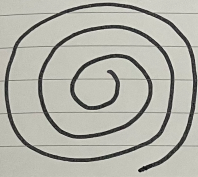
While we are watching it, everything is fine. But you cannot understand, because you do not exist. And it is a relief you are not here, otherwise you will ask me, 'Dad, where were you when this happened?' And my answer can only be, 'In front of my screen'. Like now.

All the Worst

Your (Un)D(e)ad

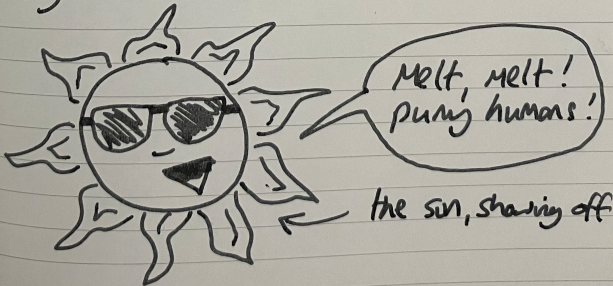
Dear Emmeline,

I am writing to you now in 2022, but you won't be able to read this for many years, well 5 or 6 at least. Anyway it's pretty cool, cos it's a bit like time travel - I'm talking to you from the past.



weird, magic vortex of time thingy

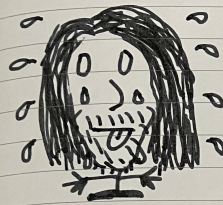
Last Tuesday (July 19th) was the hottest day EVER in the UK. The temperature was over 40°C for the first time. It was not quite that hot in Whitley Bay, but probably a local record.



the sun, shining off

On both Monday and Tuesday it just got too hot in the flat with every room over 30°C. By the afternoon

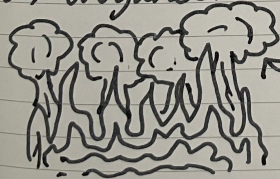
I was sweating like crazy in the studio and it was just too hot to work properly.



Dad - sweaty and tired

On Tuesday we ended up just going down to the beach to cool off and you had a chip of your toes in the sea. Just as we were leaving we saw Benny and Jan with the two twins - Anabel and Benji plus their Grandad. They had got too hot at home also.

The beach was packed with families all having a fun time. This is great, but... also not so great as it reminds us the world is warming up much too fast. There are forest fires everywhere.

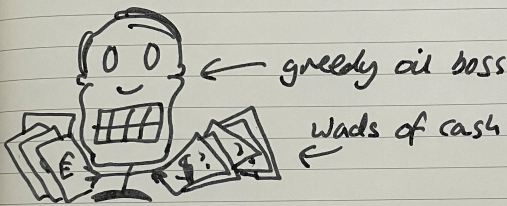


trees - soon to be ex-trees

We're using way, way, way too much oil and other fossil fuels and when we burn them for energy they release CO₂ into the atmosphere. This causes a

greenhouse effect. And trust me this is ~~not~~ the nice type of greenhouse that uncle Den uses to grow his tomatoes!

In my opinion too many fat cat businessmen are not doing enough to move towards green energy. Whilst we can always 'do our bit' until big business and governments make the change, it won't get better.

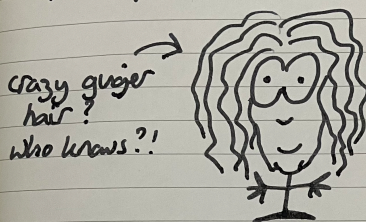


Who knows if humanity can solve this problem of all problems and who knows what temperatures the UK will be feeling when you eventually read this. All I can say is don't be too scared about it and above all have hope. Never turn a blind eye and do what your heart tells you to do. Maybe you'll be like your former namesake and protest?! You have a right to be angry, but also a right to be happy and like I said...

HOPE

I hope your generation leaves the world in a better place for your children than we have for ours.

From past Dad to future Emmy



Stay strong, I love you

x

Dear zombie government decision maker,

I hereby send you my spoken word poem, in hopes it will persuade you to let us all live.

LOVE'S EDICT

As the stars leave us,

We will be surrounded by a rain of sparkles, amidst our terror.
The crashing of skies and waterfalls will be poetic in its endeavour.
Like a scene in a film where calamities crash just as violins play.
The juxtaposition will be because we finally see what we had and gave away.
We'll watch the beautiful planet writhe and understand its full power.
The majesty it never unleashed on us until in our final hour.
You see it protected us. Kept us safe in every way.
Giving us blue skies, oxygen. If only the love had gone both ways.
Instead of love and gratitude, we retaliated with hate.
Treated it like a rubbish bin for our consumer waste.
This is no revenge plate. No Justice served to us cold.
It is simply like a mama bear. Protected us while it could.
And now it's slowly dying, it can't protect us anymore.
We need to step up and take care of it now, give back the love.
If not for the planet's sake, then do it for all those you know.
2050 is not so far away that your eyes can remain closed.
Love or hate's an easy choice. Life or death should be as bold.
Comedy, art, literature lost, like Atlantis, if we can't be cajoled.
What is there to hesitate for, with the ground beneath exposed.
I choose life, humanity, more; I choose my home.
Let's stop pretending like death is our only road.
For all the children after us and all that we walk with and owe.
A duty of care must be unleashed now from chasms of our soul.
As the stars leave us,
We will be surrounded by a rain of sparkles, amidst our terror.
The crashing of skies and waterfalls will be poetic in its endeavour.
Like a scene in a film, we can choose a different way.
End with blue skies and 'humanity thrives' because we changed things today.
Carpe diem never meant so much, will we finally seize our day?
We can watch the planet heal or cry, it's our choice, come what may.

Yours Sincerely,
Leila

20th July 2022

Dear God,

When you created the earth, your desire was to have a world where all life forms could live in harmony. But man is destroying your beautiful world through his ignorance, his greed for power and wealth.

In a recent COP26 meeting, several of the world's top leaders promised to reduce carbon emissions by 2050. But where is the evidence that they have put their plan into action? Green spaces are still being turned into housing estates, often built on the flood plains, and the development of new business parks results in office blocks that no companies will ever accommodate.

Man's continuous obsession with deforestation is limiting nature's ability to keep carbon emissions out of the atmosphere and consequently this is having a detrimental effect on wildlife. Animals and birds, especially in the rainforests, are losing their habitat and are on the verge of extinction.

As I write this letter, the world is seeing unprecedented temperatures and, due to these hot temperatures, more wildfires are occurring, destroying not only forests and land but properties. Take for example in London yesterday, where temperatures rose to a squelching 40°C, causing grassfires to spread to houses resulting in black toxic smoke polluting the atmosphere and the rivers. Clean water is paramount for the survival of all life forms and without it biodiversity, the ecosystem along with human life will not survive. If the earth's temperature continues to rise, we will see reservoirs drying up and crops wilting. Droughts and famine, previously seen in biblical times, will become a normal occurrence in the twenty-first century.

As politicians, CEOs and some members of the general public continue to ignore, or are in denial, that global warming poses a threat to life on earth, I am asking for your help. I would like you to find a way in which to intervene and help save the earth that you created.

Yours sincerely,

Helen

July 2022

Dear Harry,

I hope you don't mind me calling you Harry rather than Dad, but I'm 74 now and you only got to 61, so I'm the senior. So many things have changed in the world in the 55 years since I last saw you. I remember how you used to store up interesting facts from programmes you'd listened to on the Home Service, eager to pass them on to me when I got in from school. It's my turn to reciprocate. I remember too how you used to worry and get down about life. I've inherited that – and there are some big things to worry about. I think you'll understand.

It's the climate and the fate of our beautiful world that I'm writing about. Everything is heating up now – you can't imagine the damage we've done burning coal and oil – all those fires in homes, all those furnaces in factories, all the smoke that spewed into the air. The planet is choking.

Remember the glaciers, the amazing cold worlds of the Arctic and the Antarctic. I had that nature book with photographs – lovely icy blue and white habitats. Now those worlds are shrinking. The ice is melting. It is all disappearing. Where will the polar bears go? And where will all the water go? Floods are threatening low-lying coastlines and the strings of islands that edge the shores.

At the same time rising temperatures are drying out the land. Fires break out and run wild through forests, over mountains, through settlements. How didn't we see this coming? As a species we are so greedy, putting our wants above the needs of the planet. We have not nurtured our creatures. Remember the moths drawn indoors to the lamps through the summer? I never see moths like that now, nor bats. Hedgehogs are endangered. Small rodents are a rarity. We haven't looked after their habitats.

We have all been careless, uncaring, but now there are voices speaking out for the planet. There is so much to do to reverse the momentum. I hope it is not too late. It needs more people to care – especially the ones who have the power and influence to create change. I don't know how they can ignore what is happening. You'd have something to say about that. I know you'd share my concern for our creatures but you were more of a pessimist than I am – more of a loner. I expect you'd take some convincing that enough people will care, or that there was anything you could do. But if you were here you could use your design skills, could create one of your offbeat posters and we'd put it online (no time to explain what that is now). Millions would see your pictures of forests burning and glaciers melting, and you could find space too for the small scuttling creatures. You'd come up with a great slogan, I know. How brilliant that would be!

It's good to dream. I hope it was right to tell you all this. I think you would want to know.

With love,

Cynthia

Fondazione Giorgio Cini Venezia - Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore

HEY BIG
BUSINESS,
GET YOUR DIRTY
FRACKING
HANDS OFF
OUR
PLANET

Dear Greta

I know you've read Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'. It's happened here in the NE of England: for the last month there's been an unnerving silence, occasionally interrupted by the wailing of ambulances. It is now a daily occurrence to witness birds dropping out of the sky. Today's count: five goldfinch, eleven gulls and a hoopoe. The tarmac is melting; Kielder Forest fire still rages and the stench from the River Tyne is getting stronger. On a more positive note, there have been thousands of comma butterflies swarming here this summer.

Soon you'll be arriving for the Global Conference - 'Last Chance Saloon' as the cynics have dubbed it - so I have a message for you. As you know, we have a decade or less to act for the future. I want to encourage you, when most people have given up hope. I know the suicide rate has increased in Sweden as well as here in the UK. But there is still time.

The Grey Ones have made contact as you may have heard by the rumours. However, they are not mere rumours: I have had more than one visitation. They are our last chance. Even now they are helping a few of us to dismantle the capitalist death machine; even now they are engineering the ocean floors to capture carbon; even now they are introducing us to green technologies. Soon, these interventions will become globally apparent. On 31 December there will be a planetary event which will finally open the world's eyes to a new way of living; a new start. Please do your best to allay people's fears. You no longer need people to be scared. You need to give people hope; hope in a kind of transfiguration.

Even if humanity died out, life would continue on this planet. The Grey Ones have told me that we humans are not so important and are mere children in the cosmic scheme. However, they also told me they foresee a time when humanity will genuinely be 'as one' - a time when each of us will know deep in our hearts a kinship with all living things; a time when we will restrain our consumption and be content with less; a time when we will take our place as mature beings in the cosmos.

Bless you, Greta. Please take this message of hope to the world. We will be saved!

Metta from
Erik

Rt. Hon Greg Hands MP
Minister for Climate Change

Fire/Fear

It was only the setting sun
catching the distant moor alight
but for a moment I saw fire.

Heather blazing in a torment
of flame and smoke, intense
heat penetrating bog, burning peat
destroying its vital carbon store,
animals, birds, insects, all going up
as fire gorged on life.

It was only the setting sun
and soon its bright transcendent glow
orange, umbre, gold, faded
into a single note, calm
resting again across the hills.

This poem, written after an evening walk near the West Pennine hills, expresses the fear that is ever-present in our minds and hearts as temperatures soar and rainfall decreases.

I urge you to keep the state of our fragile planet in your own mind and heart as you make decisions around policies to curb climate change.

Yours truly,

Pamela Galloway

An Open Letter to the Last Surviving Polar Bear
18th July 2035

Dear Polar Bear

I know this is going to sound shallow and insulting, but I want to apologise for causing the destruction of your home and, ultimately, your entire species. I'm sure it won't be much consolation to you, as you float towards the equator on the last chunk of polar ice, but we haven't singled out Polar Bears for annihilation. We're rapidly wiping out other species too. In fact, we've been doing it for centuries. We keep a list of those whose days are numbered. It's called the Red List. There are dozens of animals and plants on it. Little comfort to you, I'm sure, but before long we'll have to add ourselves.

It's not that we haven't been aware of the damage we've been causing. Nearly two hundred years ago the poet John Clare saw what was happening to the countryside around him and wrote this:

The bees flye round in feeble rings/And find no blossom bye

Then thrum their almost weary wings/Upon the moss and die

At the end of the same century, the great environmentalist John Muir was writing about the impact of human activity on wilderness areas in North America. And the modern environmental movement has been active since at least the middle of the twentieth century. Reports have been written, conferences held, songs sung and protests staged.

But just like in John Clare's day, there are very powerful people focussed on creating as much wealth as possible for themselves, regardless of the environmental consequences. These powerful people control most of the media, and ensure that concerns about the environment are ignored or disclaimed. They lobby, sometimes bribe, governments, encouraging them to pass laws to deter protest and criminalise protesters.

This is all going to sound like excuses to you. And you're right. I need to examine my own actions. For most of my life I've known about the damage we humans have been doing to the planet and its other inhabitants. But what have I done to help prevent it? I know the answer is *not enough*.

My dear Polar Bear, I've just realised that this isn't a letter to you at all, although I am sincerely sorry for what we've done to you and your kin. It's a letter to myself. You probably realised that from the start. You've been thinking this is all self-pitying garbage. But please don't judge me yet. Everything depends on what I do next.

I've only ever seen Polar Bears on TV or YouTube, but I've known about you since I was two years old. You've always been an important part of the world I carry around in my head. Now, I can't take my eyes off the livestream of your voyage south. You look so lonely and bewildered. I guess you're pining for your cubs and their mother, and a cold sea. The experts can't agree what to do with you – rescue you and put you in a zoo, shoot you, let you die a natural death in unnatural surroundings? Someone suggested building an artificial ice platform at the North Pole, but that's just crazy – and in any case it would be cruel to leave you there, marooned and alone.

I think a humane, dignified death is the least you deserve from us. I'm sorry. I will miss you.

Yours Sincerely
Colin

Dear Climate Anxiety Sufferer,

Anxiety is horrible and paralyzing. Whilst feeling like that, this poem came to me and it helped release hope and the possibility of change. I offer it to you. May it help you too.

After the Apocalypse

In the time after time
in which no time was left,
in which there was only dark and light,
she was surprised to have survived.
At first, she slept through the dark
and through the ash haze light.
When the light cleared, she found
a Rowan tree to sleep beneath,
a little food to gather.
 She listened to the silence
 within and without.
After a while, others joined her,
followed her guidance.
None would speak of leaders,
but they needed the space of silence
around and within her.
Leading them to a stand of Sitka Spruce,
 she listened to the silence
 within and without.
A few were felled, chopped, sawn.
The strong constructed a hexagonal hut,
a domed roof around the Rowan,
made furniture of Apple wood.
Her hands stroked the pale Spruce,
greeting her old friend again.

 She slept in the hut listening
 to the silence within and without.
They gathered there to discuss,
debate, care for one another
around the hearth of sap,
the red berry flames reaching skywards.
Some spoke for the soil, water,
plants, trees, fish, birds, animals.
All voices were heard.
When the debate got heated,
she called for silence lest a flame
of rage brought disaster again.

She listened to the silence within and without
and the silence and the space grew.
They had need of that space and silence
in the time after the time
in which no time was left.

*Let your imaginations fly free and your actions
follow them.*

In solidarity, Mary

16th August 2022

Dear Patrick Grady

There is only one answer: We need to stop drilling for oil. Valerie Gillies wrote '*healing is possible (even when there is no cure)*' on her [When the Grass Dances](#) website. My question to you is: Is healing really possible for our planet earth, even when there's no cure? What can politicians do now to stop the rising temperatures. On a warm day with chem-trails criss-crossing the sky, we ask when – when will enough be enough to kill us all? When will we run out of gas? We've nearly sucked the earth of all her oil. Will we have enough water to drink?

As I float on a lochan near the West Highland Way, I see so many white lines from jets gradually fuse into a thin haze across the sky magnifying the sun's rays. I feel the infrared heat and I'm frightened for my children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren. What sort of world are we leaving them, how will we survive this current extinction?

What can you do, Patrick? Don't you think it's time to stop digging, stop mining, stop drilling, stop fracking; time to slow down, to consume less, take a break and review the past five hundred years of our growth economy that has been trashing the planet with our greed and exploitation? What habits do we need to change if we and other sentient beings who share our earth are to survive this climate emergency? And the trees and plants we need for our food. Habits don't change overnight. How can we implement our intention to change?

We know it's wrong, we are not ignorant. It seems as if we just can't stop ourselves from globe-trotting our planet, polluting the air, idling our cars. Incessant, insistent – *we gotta-get-away* – away for holidays on the Costa Brava, skiing in Canada, scuba diving the coral reefs before they disappear, a visit to Venice before it sinks into the sea . . .

What would healing look like? What would healing smell like? What would healing taste like? What would healing sound like? What would healing feel like? Do you think healing is possible for our dear Planet Earth, even when there is no cure – as many scientists are now saying?

Yes? No? Maybe? Are you sure? How? What can you do to help us move towards a life-sustaining culture for Scotland and all living beings on earth?

May you find courage to change the law like we did about smoking in public places.

I look forward to your reply.

Your sincerely,

Sukhema

Glasgow

Dear Mum

I've been invited to write a letter about climate and ecological change and send it to anyone I wish. My letter is for you Mum. I know this won't mean much to you. You were born in 1908 and It's nearly forty years since you died, and we weren't talking about such stuff then. I can see you at home Mum, looking after us and the house, diligently day by day. I was 46 when you died. I'm 82 now. Don't feel it. And I've still got a good memory.

Laundry – Monday was washday – you had a deep sink in the kitchen and soap suds from a big bar of soap. You are standing with your arms deep in the sink, scrubbing brush in your right hand. Cuffs and collars – always the grimmest bits. You slap each garment onto the draining board. Scrub, scrub, scrub. Wringing it out with a strong grip – grasping, twisting, squeezing, turning. Thick towels, cotton bedsheets. Rinsing next, then through the hand turned mangle you have dragged over to the sink. Hang them out on the line in the garden. Wooden dolly pegs, wooden clothes prop with a V notch in the top to lift the full line up into the wind.

I remember the twin-tub Dad bought to make things easier. Wash tub on the left, spin on the right. Filled through a hose from the tap into the wash compartment. Switch it on and it heats up. Lid down, grab the handle on top that moves the paddle below, work it to and fro, thrash clothes, forward and back, round and round. Us kids think this is fun for five minutes but you do all the energetic work. Then into the spin-drier that flings the water out and back into the sink. Progress. It feels modern. Next, wash powder in a cardboard box and Persil White in our language. You and Nana used a lot of bleach. Poured down sinks indoors and out to keep everything smelling clean. Great God Domestos swilling the yard. Now that we understand what harm it does to creatures in the rivers and in the sea, so no more bleach. We use non-bio detergents.

The rag and bone man doesn't come around anymore. *'Any Rag Bo-one?'* His horse and cart rattling along the back alleys. We can't dump all our rubbish into the old metal bin with the clattering lid, ready for landfill. We must separate cardboard and paper from bottles, from tins, from plastic which gets collected, melted down, made into something else, re-cycled. I know you'd be very tidy with your re-cycling.

So, what happened to low-impact off-grid living, to sharing bath water with each other once we all got showers? As you know, we lived in a caravan for five years. I could do wonders with one pint of warm water, task after task ... but that's another story. I've had an automatic washing machine since the 1980's, but never a tumble dryer. You would be shocked at the electricity they gobble up. The wind outside is free, the clothes smell nice which is a bonus.

We don't, can't, mustn't burn coal anymore. So we've got rid of that smog in towns and bad chests. Electricity warms us from thousands of beautiful wind turbines, often installed row after row in the sea. We see them from miles away. A wind farm? Strange name that. No tractors, no mud, no cattle or crops. Farming the wind!! We farm wave power too – capturing energy from tides and rivers. Scientists and engineers are building life-enhancing inventions to look after the land, the air, the oceans. And we are insulating our houses, our roofs, our windows. No draughts!

Young people really get it and are serious about the mess we're in and are calling for governments worldwide to wake up urgently and make decisions about how we all might live safely. We must tackle deforestation and the epidemic of illegal mining in protected areas. We have worldwide crises. Storms and floods are coming like we've never seen before. Drought and wildfires too. These are the problems we have to solve, brought on by our own thoughtlessness and greed.

So Mum, what else to say? I've tried hard to keep our children safe and well. They are parents themselves now, doing the same, if not better, for their children. There's a tough future ahead for your great grandchildren, which I won't be around to witness. We try to give them resilience, values of collaboration and community rather than competition and capitalism. I have every faith in their energy and vision. It's their inheritance, which is why these letters are important.

With much love and thanks for everything you gave me
Your daughter
Sue Gill x

Dear Kindred Sibling of the Sky,

Molecules of mist cannot even cloud my vision as the unearthling becomes more and more unsettling. A status quo fuelled for so long, curating an existence only the ill-fated can ignore. Critical crescendos in the march to your swan song — these words of intervention will wait no more.

Distinctive and gifted, apart you stand, perfectly poised polar portal of light and dark, unique and destined for something grand, singular spectator of efforts devoid of that spark.

A reclusive relic, out of touch with reality — so superficial the view which you take of me, beneath the surface being what you fail to perceive. Therein speaks the starkness of the similarity.

Brief and short-lived though it turned out to be, brilliantly basking in my own moment to shine — temperate, cool, with oceans of potential, scenes and sounds of the stellar and divine... A kinship unimaginable from the grey and wrinkles of this ageing but now enlightened entity?

Though there are those with different views entirely, blind to expiry dates and lack of eternity, naysayers of signs, doubters, and spouters of disbelief, armies aligned against the laws of logicity, archaic notions fighting the forces of this century.

A disastrous fast-forwarding of a dial unable to be undone — why force the will of the wildest of weather, with daily dismissals of what needs to be done while knowing earthliness is not endowed forever?

Three hundred and sixty degrees of high stakes, the cards are clear to see — no need for hindsight... So, astronomical achiever akin to the greats, striver and seeker of herculean height after height, of mountainous feats, among humans, moons and stars, time now to finetune the telescopic focus closer to home at not-so-distant fumes and constant sounding of alarms.



I am no writer, orator, nor the one with all the power but I work these words into verse after verse at speeds so supersonic to supersede any barrier, as the juncture of the journey upon which you traverse it now fatefully faces you at this final hour.

Destruction, construction, creation, preservation — juxtapositions prophetically posed at this junction, decisions that determine if the road to be taken speaks of a future tale of resurrection... Now, I will say no more but ask simply what will be of the unwritten legacy that still remains. Are you to be a lost artefact of time — another version of me — or do you declare this your decade of change?

Celestial V

Dear Jon,

I had such dreams.

I was going to change everything. I wrote letters, signed petitions and went on marches, all in a vain attempt to wake people up to the horrible fact that our beautiful blue planet was hurting and in trouble. I was so worried about DDT, acid rain and the hole in the ozone. I knew that the coal fires my generation grew up with and the many cars on our roads pumping out exhaust fumes were making things so much worse, but the lawmakers did not wish to listen.

Then you came along; my beautiful, precious firstborn. We planted a plum tree at the bottom of our Edwardian house's garden to celebrate your birth and carefully placed the newly purchased gold-tipped fountain pen in your stripped pine chest for later. Because you, my beloved baby, were going to have the education I lacked and you, with your sapphire blue eyes, freckled nose, auburn hair and calm soul, were going to really make the lawmakers stop, listen, protect, heal and ultimately respect our wondrous world.

We walked together in warm March and April sunshine under the protective canopies of ancient oaks amongst the subtle scents of spring flowers serenaded by the melodies of Lea Valley birds.

But you, my beloved son, only bloomed with the daffodils and when they withered and died so did you. We only had 34 days together. Oh, how I and this poor broken world wish your life could have been longer, because who knows what you might have achieved?

Dedicated to Jon Eric Lloyd Waller 25/3/1980 – 28/4/1980

To the wild and free,

I think about freedom a lot these days.

I fall asleep and I dream of icy lands, packs of whites swirling in deep water.

I grew up in a region of green, round hills, taking for granted the deep shades of the forest and the smell of pine trees. My dad used to take us to a clearing, hiding letters from Peter Pan under a rock. We'd lift the rock and find letters – magic – or nothing – disappointment. We'd come back home, start again another day, and keep the conversation going.

Freedom. I am one of the freest people alive, I know. I am a 25 year-old woman with no real commitment. I strive for freedom, I devour it. I used to believe freedom meant I could do anything I wanted. I could travel the world, wander in a street market in China, pick apples in Australia and repair bikes in rural Russia. I could kiss strangers and smoke cigarettes and write poems about it all. I could go to icy lands and spot whales and come back to tell the tale. Keep the conversation going.

But freedom does not quite work that way, does it? Freedom is not something you can take and escape with. The freedom I grew up dreaming of comes with a cost.

So, when I dream of soft ice, giant whales, it is wishful thinking. Freedom comes with responsibility, and I can not fly anymore without feeling guilty, burdened, suffocated. It is easy to be reminded of reality when the dream ends. I wake up in a land of dry, yellow grass. Where are my trees, and the green hills? They die slowly.

Guiltily, burdened, suffocated. The world feels heavy these days. You can count the chances to be light and stupid on your fingers – deep, precious breaths of lightness and carelessness. And then it stops.

We feel our bodies. Heavy.

We learn to fit in and to take space. A tricky balance of privileges. Despite the heaviness, I do not know how to grow big enough to make a difference. We have learned that in order to fit in we have to be a certain shape, live a certain way, write a certain way. Like mowed grass, short and trampled, we learn to be small and pretty, and submissive... until it burns, unprotected. And we burn with it.

I have focused on the wrong kind of freedom. I did not realise it came at the expense of others, at all of our expenses. The grass in my hometown is yellow. I have never seen such a shade to it.

So what if my words slip in a direction that is not fully expected? That is what nature does.

Unattended it grows wild, expands, takes ownership. Badly attended it grows even bigger, expands, intrudes, reclaims. Perhaps I want to learn from it, from the nudging and the intrusion. I want my words to grow wild the way nature does, until forests are green and hills are round and my body mimics it, round and gentle and powerful. Maybe that is what freedom is. Giving up on old dreams, and expanding with nature.

New times, new shades, new shapes.

If the world takes new shades we need to change our shapes. Those made to feel small must try to regain some space. I will start with these words.

To new dreams, and much freedom.

August 2022



Dear Lal,

You're fifteen now, the age I was when I heard an area the size of Wales was burned in the Amazon: daily, monthly, weekly? I can't remember and given the destruction since, it's probably irrelevant. Only, I lived in Wales and the hugeness of the loss made an impact on me. Imagine – Church Island, all of Anglesey, all of Snowdonia, as far as the eye could see, all the many miles of Wales I couldn't see, a blackened, burning wasteland.

So I joined Greenpeace. I went out with BTCV and planted trees. I hung off cliffs counting guillemots for the RSPB. I didn't eat meat. I wrote letters and signed petitions. I thought that together we could turn the industrial tanker, we could save the planet.

I washed clothes at 30 degrees and learnt to eat seasonal local veg like kohlrabi. I know you're not convinced yet, but it's not used a load of synthetic fertilizer and has low food miles... And we stayed living in the city, even though I didn't really want to, so we could use public transport for work and walk to school. Because if we all make sacrifices, we can save the planet. Only somehow it didn't happen.

We sit on the beach at Warkworth and watch the gannets drop like arrows into the water. But just out of sight, on the Bass Rock, the Farnes and on Coquet Island, a purple smudge in front of us, wardens gather hundreds of corpses in small plastic body bags. The human obsession for chicken has led to cruelly intensive farms, spreading disease into the wild. There'll be no seabird chicks this year. Maybe ever. We both know this, but we don't mention it. We swim in the cool salt sea and close our eyes. There's nothing we can do. The situation is 'being monitored', whatever government non-action that phrase covers.

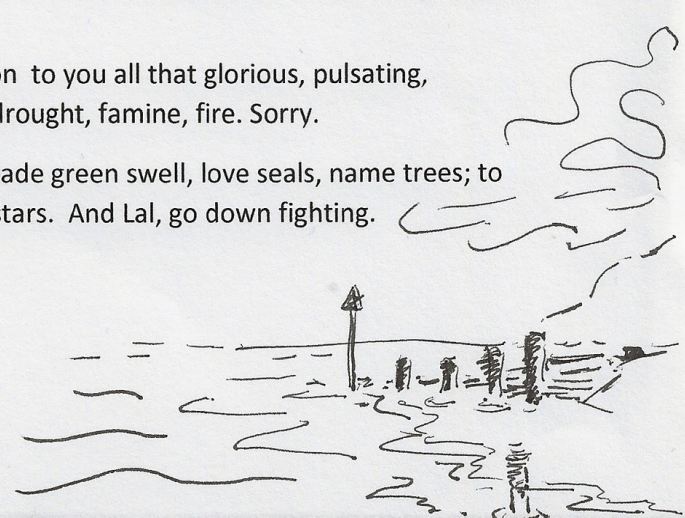
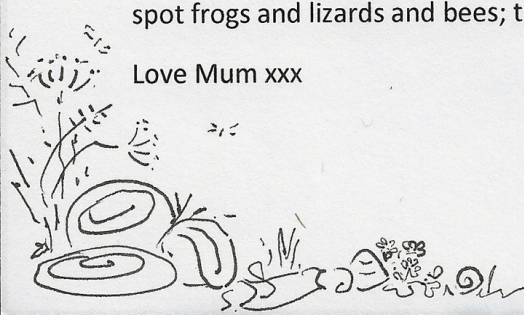
Endless bad news. A nuclear power station in Ukraine about to explode, at the same time as the announcement of the go ahead for Sizewell C and rumblings about Wylfa B. As if we are somehow beyond the destructive forces others face. As if something poisonous for hundreds of years is good news. Your childhood has been spent, visiting Grandma, looking at that white alien toadstool, Sizewell, on the horizon, hearing adult jokes about how very warm the Southwold sea is... and then to Anglesey Grandma, Wylfa squatting malignant at the top of the island. I hoped that we'd not build such monstrous places again. Sorry Lal, our voices just aren't loud enough. Our arguments, though scientifically persuasive, don't come with cash backhanders or big contracts. When I was fifteen I was optimistic we could make a difference. You're cynical. As each wave of bad news washes over us, you're sad, but never surprised. 'Why would the people in power do the right thing?' you ask. 'They never have before.'

Born in the sixties, I inherited a world scarred by war, littered with concrete bunkers, broken minds and hearts and poisoned places. But butterflies flew up in clouds on derelict sites and the woods and paths were thick with wild flowers. Once the heath burnt. Firefighters with soot grimed faces, runneled and striped like badgers as the sweat ran down, stamped and beat flames that shimmered in the sunlight, or ran ahead, flickering like creatures fleeing through the bracken. A small dog lay on the sepia grass and had a fit from the heat, jerking and frothing. Exceptional. It was an exceptional summer, 1976. It wouldn't happen again, probably, in our lifetime. Now, each year, the woods and heaths and even the high mountain bogs and the damp marshes dry to a crisp and burn. The world is on fire. We walk together on Walberswick Marsh and the flowers are withered yellow stalks, the grass a beige fuzz. There are no boggy, soggy places. We are excited to see three butterflies.

I inherited more wealth than I knew. I tried so hard to hand on to you all that glorious, pulsating, entangled life. Instead I pass on to you war, poverty, waste, drought, famine, fire. Sorry.

But please don't give up. Please continue to sea swim in the jade green swell, love seals, name trees; to spot frogs and lizards and bees; to watch sunsets and count stars. And Lal, go down fighting.

Love Mum xxx



Dear Luiz,

I understand. You must feed your family. I am a parent too and that need to sustain those we love runs as deep as the Itaimbezinho Canyon.

I understand. Life is hard and jobs are not easy to come by. You are thinking of today and the next day. Perhaps stretching to the one after that, placing food on the table and clothes on your family's backs.

I do understand. And you are right, that who am I to write to you with my life of privilege in this comfortable city on the other side of the world? It's true. I cannot begin to understand the challenges you face. You don't want any trouble and you are only following orders that trickle in an unsteady, uneasy line through various middlemen until they reach Senhor JB himself, smugly sequestered in his São Paulo villa.

I understand. None of this is your fault. And the collapse of our planet's lungs is far from the sole element throwing our fragile, interconnected ecosystem off balance.

But please listen. Please keep reading; don't look away. Though your children are only small now, one day their own children – the grandchildren you will play peteca with and feed mouthfuls of feijoada to – will need these trees you put your chainsaw to. They will need them desperately.

Whether we like to think of it or not, we are all ancestors. And to be a good ancestor, we must help keep these trees living, breathing, existing, giving. For believe me when I tell you of the abundance of their generosity. But when they lie slaughtered on the forest floor they can give us nothing. Not only that, but the circle of reciprocity is broken for all those creatures who live in the canopy, in the towering branches, in the bark, amongst the roots.

Please pause. Listen to the hurting earth as she speaks to you.

Lay down your chainsaw and use the most powerful weapon you possess: your voice.

Yours, for the love of the earth's lungs,

Rebecca

Dear Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands,

I stopped using Amazon when I read somewhere that Jeff Bezos built it on the premise that humans are greedy and lazy. A finger-click, a puff of diesel, and the things we crave appear, just like that. Affronted that Jeff thought so little of me, I cancelled Prime and deleted my payment card. Now, when I'm buying a second-hand book or darning my socks, I feel a shimmer of satisfaction. Yes, I may still drive a mile to buy oat milk for my coffee, but I'm trying. I'm doing what I can.

This summer, though, as fields combust and I wrap wet towels around the kids against the heat, I've stepped outside the fug of my own smugness and remembered why I'm wearing underpants until the elastic irremediably slackens: the earth is on fire, and we can feel the heat from here.

Most of us aren't indifferent. I know you're not. We're all resolutely doing our bit, and getting through the day, worried about fuel bills, war, the rising price of bread. On top of this, the existential threat we face is so enormous that sometimes, it's no surprise that we play dead. (For me, this takes the shape of lying very still on the sofa, dozing intermittently through crime dramas – not too gritty, not too cosy. Everything is ok, sort of, by the time I wake up at the end and Vera climbs into her battered Land Rover and drives home over the hills.) The panic ebbs and flows. I ignore the whisper of the ghost of what-is-yet-to-come tugging on my coat.

(This is what she says: "Your actual and not-at-all-symbolic children and your children's children will burn or starve or drown or die in violent disorder as the ecosystem collapses. They will live hard lives. Their deaths will not be gentle. What will you do to save them?")

I throw myself into the path of distraction. I self-soothe, watching YouTube minimalists showing me their almost-empty cupboards. And the earth is still on fire.

But there is still a moment as the needle swings between panic and denial, and in this moment, I know we can be different. Tangibly, practically, taste-and-see different. After all, we used to think the sun went round the earth, that God anointed kings, that the earth was flat, that healthcare was for those who could afford it, that unmarried mothers shouldn't raise children, that gay people were abominations, that men shouldn't cry, that women couldn't play football, and that Birmingham was dull and best avoided. Defunct ideas that serve the few and keep the many in our place – wealth trickles down, growth is always good, humans are greedy and lazy – are loosening their grip and giving way to other life-sustaining possibilities.

The needle will keep swinging between panic and denial, but in that space between, we can draw breath. I am hopeful. Even if we are too late to save ourselves, why not live as if we could? Our city's great at making. What if we took all that went into making the Commonwealth Games – the resources, the creative thinking, the drive to deliver – and channelled these skills, this spirit, into this last chance to save ourselves? We need to act as if time were running out and as if we had a chance to save what we love. We need to act as if the earth were burning.

We can't defuse the existential threat or match it with a planet-sized solution. We need a different kind of growth: something disruptive and persistent as a dandelion breaking through concrete, something wild and untidy that benefits people and planet. Led by nature's principles, we can start acorn-small, with veg growing on verges, micro-orchards in schools, beehives on traffic islands. And with these bright pockets of hopefulness, our city – built on making, great for shopping – can embrace its new purpose. We cannot buy or manufacture our way out. Tweaking our habits of consumption – paper straws, compostable cups – won't fix this. Instead, let's embrace inconvenience. Let's extend radical hospitality to our neighbours and to our unborn grandchildren, reclaiming our high streets with libraries of things, community fridges, pay-as-you-feel no-waste cafés, repair shops; not pop-ups, but publicly funded, permanent places to share our surplus, borrow what we need, and learn to sustain ourselves and each other. We'll remember what 'enough' feels like, and the effects will change the world: when we stop depleting Earth, we will enrich each other, for the true Common Weal.

Yours sincerely

Dear Mr Dunn,

I'm writing to say how sorry I am about the loss of your home and to thank you for sharing your story. It has given me a great deal to think about.

Like you, I have always loved to be beside the sea, with many of my happiest memories involving visits to the likes of Whitby, Scarborough and Filey while I was growing up in York. But to know that up to eight feet of our coastal landscape is now vanishing every year, with the rate increasing, feels both impossible and terrifying. I can only imagine what it might be like to know your home is at risk of the same fate.

I can remember in my younger years being on a local beach and looking up at the cliffs, great chunks of muddy bank having fallen or else still clinging to the edge, like a giant had swept up a handful of land and tossed it aside. I had no idea that the increase in heavy rains, rising water levels and soft clay soils were causing such chaos across the coast. Looking back, I wish I'd understood how our own choices had contributed to such destruction. How humans, not nature, had led to this.

Global warming, freak weather conditions, climate change – they are now in the news on a daily basis, but I imagine they bring you and the many others in a similar position scant hope. Too little, too late. It's a fearful future and there are no easy answers. The efforts made to help – by councils, by environmental groups – have often added to the damage, and while leaving your home might be inevitable, I want you to know that there is hope for the future. Your loss will not have been in vain.

I'm reminded of Greta Thunberg's phrase, 'Our house is on fire'. Our house is also sinking, disappearing, fading from view, from the landscape, but not from our memories. Gone but not forgotten. Your house will never be forgotten. For myself and other readers, your article has been a potent reminder of the urgency to voice the problems and to find solutions. To change, to grow, to learn new ways to live with instead of against the natural world. I am truly sorry I cannot help you now, but I feel inspired and hopeful for a better future.

With kind regards,

Rachel

Author's Note: *Keith Dunn was a resident of Tunstall in East Riding where he had lived with his wife since 1970. His story appeared in the article 'On the Edge' written by Emily Collins in The Dalesman, October 2019. Since its publication, Mr Dunn has sadly passed away. The fate of Mr Dunn's property is unknown.*

Dear Aria,

Here I am, writing a letter to you. I know you are just a fictional character, the protagonist of my still unpublished novel, but I feel like you are the only one I can talk to. You're the only one who can understand.

You, girl of the future, live in a world that has been destroyed by us. And by I us I mean the generations who came before yours. People who could have changed things but couldn't be bothered.

Scientists started talking about global warming in the '70s. People protested on the streets, asking governments to try and stop it, but governments didn't listen. They prioritised economic growth. Fifty years later, the situation is basically the same, except now we're running out of time. And if things go the way they do in your story, Aria, in another fifty years, the consequences of our inaction will be unbearable. We'll do something then, but it'll be too late. It's crazy to think that we'll be passing the problem to you, hoping you'll save us from our own negligence, hoping you'll prevent the extinction of our species, despite knowing that the time to act is now. Actually, to be fair, we should have started ages ago.

What's wrong with us? Have we accepted the decadence of our home, mother Earth, and of our species? You will probably wonder the same thing in 2072, when your story begins. In your time, the outside is so unwelcoming that the only way to stay alive is to stay indoors. People have been living in lockdown for twenty years and you, Aria, belong to the first generation born in captivity. You've never left your house. In fact, very few specific reasons allow you people to go out, and when that happens, you have to be well protected. The face masks we complained about in the last couple of years are nothing compared to what you have to wear to keep yourselves safe.

Climatologists have been telling us for so long that these are the scenarios we are facing but we don't wanna listen. We don't wanna know.

Sorry, Aria. You could be my granddaughter and I know I should have done more to protect you from this, to guarantee you a future. We all should have. If only we had done our part, you would be free.

But I am still hopeful, Aria. I want to believe that there's still a chance we'll wake up and stand up for our planet – our home – and for our species. I want to believe that we won't leave you to deal with this mess. I'll do my best to prevent that from happening, I promise, and hopefully other people will do the same and governments will finally act. So, maybe, your real story will be different, happier than the one produced by my imagination. I really wish that for you.

Yours sincerely,

Brooxy