

Reimagining Humanity

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Abstract

'Faced with inevitable collapse, leading scientists used some of the industrial world's last remaining technological and energy resources to design and provide an AI bot for selected people on the planet.' The following short fiction story explores the next version of human settlement after the collapse of this one, as predicted by Bendell's research into 'Deep Adaptation' (Bendell, 2020). Dr. Bendell warns us that, unless we find ways to radically change our lifestyle, 'human societies will experience disruptions to their basic functioning within less than ten years due to climate stress. Such disruptions include increased levels of malnutrition, starvation, disease, civil conflict and war – and will not avoid affluent nations.' Through this story, we illustrate the idea that a societal collapse may actually be what humanity, and most certainly what the earth, needs.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous Cultures, Fiction, Deep Adaptation, Sustainability, Survival of the Fittest

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'Life is, in itself and forever, shipwreck. To be shipwrecked is not to drown. The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms which is his reaction against his own destruction, is culture – a swimming stroke... But ten centuries of cultural continuity brings with it – among many advantages the great disadvantage that man believes himself safe, loses the feeling of shipwreck, and his culture proceeds to burden itself with parasitic and lymphatic matter. Some discontinuity must therefore intervene, in order that man may renew his feeling of peril, the substance of his life. All his life-saving equipment must fail, then his arms will once again move redeemingly.

Consciousness of shipwreck, being the truth of life, constitutes salvation. Hence I no longer believe in any ideas except the ideas of shipwrecked men.'

–José Ortega Y Gasset

It has been 90 years since Bernard Rudofsky wrote in an article for *Domus*, '*Non ci vuole un nuovo modo di costruire, ci vuole un nuovo modo di vivere* – what we need is not new technologies but a new way of living.' Since then, many scientists, with research and data, have urged us to change our behaviour to avoid environmental, social, and economical collapse. Dr. Jem Bendell warns us in 'Deep Adaptation' that, unless we find ways to radically change our lifestyle, 'human societies will experience disruptions to their basic functioning within less than ten years due to climate stress. Such disruptions include increased levels of malnutrition, starvation, disease, civil conflict and war – and will not avoid affluent nations.' We have known this for decades, yet we continue to focus on developing new technologies, depleting one natural resource after another.

The following story is fiction, not for entertainment purposes or to instruct readers what to do, but to inspire their critical faculties.

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It was as if our neck collars had come off all at once. It caught everyone by surprise and took us some time to realise we were free. We sat there like birds in a cage with the door wide open.

One night, the electricity, phones, and water all went out. After a week, the stores ran out of essential goods. People started burning whatever they could to cook and stay warm. Looting began. It was still safe during the day. Under the sun, humans remained civil to each other. But that didn't last long. Everyone became savage in trying to protect what they had. We soon realised many are willing to kill others for it.

I kept thinking of those annoying people on Sunday mornings with their gasoline-powered leaf blowers, my drive to Walmart to buy a gallon of water, and the last thing I bought on Amazon – an ink cartridge for my printer which was wrapped in plastic in a box covered with full-colour graphics, placed in a huge cardboard box and delivered in a truck. What were we thinking? It was sheer madness.

My family and I decided to go to the woods near where I grew up. We packed everything we could into our SUV and headed out. It's pretty remote, with clean water, plenty of fish and edible plants and berries to keep us going for a while. Winter would be a problem, but who knows if winter will come or if we'll still be here then.

'Dad, it's pulsating again!' Hana held it up from the back seat.

We had a feeling we had to bring it with us and keep it close.



FIGURE 1

1 Resilience

FACED WITH INEVITABLE COLLAPSE, LEADING SCIENTISTS USED SOME OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD'S LAST TECHNOLOGICAL AND ENERGY RESOURCES TO DESIGN AND PROVIDE AN AI BOT FOR SELECTED PEOPLE ON THE PLANET. AI BOTS HAVE ACCESS TO THE WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED AND DATA COLLECTED BY HUMANS OVER THE CENTURIES, CAN COMMUNICATE WITH ALL OTHER AI UNITS, AND CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVE, WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE OF CREATING A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN ECOLOGY.

WEEK 1

It was last Friday afternoon, just before Easter weekend. I am not a particularly religious person, but it has always been my favourite holiday. I like stories of miracles – of something unimaginable.

Hana walked through the door with a box.

'It's from the US Postal Service.' She glanced at the mailing label as she began to break open the box.

'Wait!' I yelled.

We can't be too careful these days. She rolled her eyes the same way I used to whenever my parents said or did something not cool. Inside was a shrink-wrapped, white, shiny egg. The 'i-Egg,' I thought. There were no instructions, no URL.

'What is it?' Elizabeth looked over from the kitchen.

'Can you bring scissors, Mom?'

It could be some kind of bomb, I thought, like the sarin gas massacre on the Tokyo subway, or was it Osaka?

'Hey. Stop!'

'What is this?' Hana completely ignored my plea and took it out of the plastic.

She held it in her palm, caressing it carefully like she was looking for a switch on a new iPhone. 'It's pulsating.'

We each took turns examining it. It pulsed in our hands for a few seconds, then stopped. It was heavier than it looked. I remembered the summer day when I sneaked into my uncle's garage and secretly held his gun in my hand. Hana held it to her ear but couldn't detect any sound. There was no smell or heat coming from it. She put her fingernail between the seams, trying to see if it would open. We tried shaking it to see if something was loose inside, but nothing.

Hana put it back in the box. 'Weird. It looks like it should open up from the seams or something. Maybe it needs to be charged.' She was already losing interest. 'I gotta run. I'm hitting the beach with Alex. You should Google it, Dad.'

'I need to go to the store too. I'll give you a ride, Hana.'

Moments later, they got themselves together and yelled from the doorway.

'Google it first. Don't try to break it open!'

I took out my pocketknife and went around the seams with the blade. It didn't even give. These lines may not be seams but just etchings on the surface. I had no idea what it was. All I could tell was that it was made with incredible skill and precision. I pushed different parts of it, held my fingers in different spots on it to see if it had that fingerprint recognition thing. I shook it gently, remembering the sarin incident again. I put it back in the box and got up to get my laptop.

I spent a couple of hours Googling. Nothing. All I found was a bunch of toys and candy disguised as Easter eggs. I found 'i-Eggs' that play sounds as kids get close to them during egg hunts. I closed my laptop. This

was Easter weekend after all. Camille and Osamu were flying home for spring break as we speak. I went up to their rooms to put sheets on their beds.

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My wife and I used to dream of moving to the countryside and start growing our own food and living off-the-grid. But then we had a kid, then another one, and then another one. Life took over. I kept my job as a professor just to keep up with the bills – I had lost my drive a while ago to make the world a better place by educating young minds. Now I merely entertain them. Every once in a while, we'd go hiking and imagine what it would be like to live the life we had once dreamed of. But that goes away. I see our beautiful children and become overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility – we need to provide for them and help them live their lives to the fullest – braces, Instagram-worthy clothes and vacations, first cars, college tuition, study abroad, etc. So, we kept going, just like everyone else.

As a professor of architecture, I knew better than most people the damage humanity was inflicting on this planet. Even as a child, I was aware something was wrong when I started fly fishing and realised we didn't have trout as big as my grandfather used to catch. Climate change and sustainability became household words, and we did try to contribute to minimizing the damage... Hearing myself say this now seems maddening – 'minimizing the damage.' If someone was putting poison in my daughter's food, would I have been satisfied by 'minimizing' the amount? It just didn't seem real. It didn't feel that urgent. I made up all sorts of excuses: 'I alone can't save the planet by changing my way of life.' 'I have to drive to work because our incompetent government can't provide adequate public transportation.' 'I am at least bringing tote bags when I go grocery shopping.' How ridiculous it sounds now... As small as our attempts may have been, my wife and I did try to find ways to become healthier members of this planet. We picked up some knowledge and skills for when we could actually start living off-the-grid in the countryside. We took classes on foraging, permaculture, and how to make homemade cheese. But I guess it was for all the wrong reasons. We just wanted to feel better. We just wanted to look better.

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We sat around our kitchen table trying to figure out what this egg was. Camille, our oldest daughter, picked it up and put it in her palm.

'Weird. It's pulsating.'

'It's doing that again? Let me see.' I took it from her and put it in my hand, but it had already stopped.

'Now it's pulsating.' Osamu snatched it from my hand and looked closely at it. 'It stopped. It's gotta be the battery. How do we charge this thing?'

He put it down on the table. It rolled a little and all of a sudden sat up like the old egg trick. If you put a little salt on the surface, you can make an egg stand on its end. But this was different. It rolled then stood up. Before any of us could say a word, it flashed. It was so bright that it blinded us for a second. Then it rolled back down on its side.

'What just happened?'

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The Egg didn't do anything after that. We placed it on the bookshelf in the living room for further exploration later. We had some cooking to do for Easter.

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We didn't notice it for a while. We were having dinner by candlelight. Elizabeth and I like to make 'eating' special, a ritual. I had a couple of glasses of red wine and was listening blissfully to our kids talk about their school, friends, and plans for the summer. Elizabeth and I looked at each other and smiled. Everything was wonderful. It was Hana who noticed it first.

'Hey. I think it's a blackout. Look. There are no lights in any of the houses. Streetlights are out too.'

'We've got no signal.' Osamu looked at his phone.

'It'll come back. Let's have some dessert and tea. The stove should be fine. It's gas.' I'd been looking forward to taking a bite of the pecan pie Elizabeth had made earlier.

'I'll whip the cream, Mom,' Camille and Elizabeth went into the kitchen with a candle.

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In the months leading up to the blackout, there had been news of snowstorms in Hawaii, dozens of tornadoes in New York City, and an unprecedented number of forest fires and floods on every continent. Cherry blossoms had bloomed almost a month earlier than usual in Tokyo. But I guess we had all been desensitized. It was almost exciting and entertaining to see those photos of natural disasters on the Internet. We never thought any of that would affect our lives here in the Pacific Northwest. There were signs here too, but we had chosen to ignore them.

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The military tried for a while to maintain a certain sense of order. They set up a command centre at Hana's high school and distributed food, water, and information. It didn't take long before people caught on and realised something was seriously wrong. People started to take matters into their own hands.

Since then, I've often thought about our family back east, and in Japan, but there was no way of knowing if they were okay – if they were still alive.

We left our home and headed to the Olympic Peninsula.

2 Relinquishment

WITHIN A MATTER OF WEEKS, HUMANS WOULD REALISE JUST HOW VULNERABLE THEY ARE IN THEIR OWN BACKYARDS WITHOUT MODERN CONVENIENCES. LEARNING TO BE A PART OF THE ECOSYSTEM BECOMES URGENT.

AI BOTS ARE DESIGNED TO HELP HUMANS INTEGRATE INTO THEIR ENVIRONMENTS, RATHER THAN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL OR MITIGATE IT. RATHER THAN SIMPLY TRANSMITTING KNOWLEDGE, THE AI BOTS OBSERVE THEIR HUMAN COUNTERPARTS AND ASSESS THE MOST EFFECTIVE MODE OF LEARNING.

WEEK 3

Just after sunrise, we arrived at what used to be a youth camp where I had spent my childhood. We decided to drive a few miles past the 'No Motor Vehicles' sign. We wanted to hide. I knew we were all thinking about last night – our neighbour across the street shooting a man asking for food.

Camille and I began collecting some firewood while Osamu set up our tents. Elizabeth and Hana got started on breakfast. We have our camping routines. Camille was shaken by the whole thing. So was I. I found a patch of fiddleheads.

'Hey. we should come back later with a bag and pick some of these for dinner.'

She smiled. I knew there would be berries and mushrooms we could pick too.

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'Let's hike up to the peak after breakfast.'

It was the peak my father and I used to go up to when I was little. We'd go all the way up, have lunch, and come down as we fished for trout. From the peak, we could see mountains and forests for miles all around. It was a beautiful day. We didn't hear any noise.

'Look.' Elizabeth pointed. We could see black smoke in the distance. 'I wonder if that's Seattle.'

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WEEK 20

For several months through the spring and summer, we actually enjoyed our new routines. Between what we brought, foraged, and caught we ate well. We also built huts for the kitchen, storage, and a place to hang out on rainy days. We all started our own projects too. Camille began writing stories. Osamu made music with new types of instruments he invented. Hana and Elizabeth got busy preserving food, and I was making art again. I hadn't had time to do that for I don't remember how long. But we knew winter would be here soon and were getting ready as much as we could – stockpiling firewood and insulating the huts with a mixture of clay and dried plants.

It rained almost every day. 'It feels like winter,' said Elizabeth. It did feel like winter, but it was still the middle of September.

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'Dad!'

I heard Hana's voice yelling. I jumped out of my sleeping bag.

'What happened?' I grabbed my knife without thinking.

'Look!' I followed her finger. 'It's the Egg!'

It took me a moment to comprehend. The 'i-Egg' was hovering above the table. Everyone came out of their huts.

'Woah. What did you do?' Osamu mumbled as he walked towards it. Elizabeth grabbed him.

'Don't.' There was no noise. It silently hovered without any movement. It felt as though time had stopped. Magritte's painting – 'Son of Man', I thought. Then suddenly a bright light came out of the bottom. We jumped.

'What the...' Hana cautiously got closer. 'It's an aerial map.'

The Egg was projecting an aerial map onto the table.

'It's here. It's showing where we are.'

There was a red triangle pointing to where we were.

'Look. Our camp is there too. Did this thing take this photo?'

The photo must have been shot from pretty high up. It covered at least a quarter-mile radius. Then the map began to zoom out. It zoomed out to what I estimated to be about a 3-mile radius and words appeared. 'WARNING: LANDSLIDE: ESTIMATED TIME: 6 HOURS. RECOMMENDED EVACUATION ROUTE:' Blue dotted lines appeared on the map. I was mesmerized by the quality of the photo and the graphics and didn't realise they were all looking at me.

'Dad, what are we going to do?'

How does it know? Was it recording the amount of rain? But how can it predict a landslide? Where is it telling us to go?

'Hana, let's go and see where this thing is telling us to go. It looks to be only about a mile from here. Can you all start gathering our stuff?'

I was going to get paper and a pencil to draw a map when the Egg stopped projecting and flew slowly and silently towards Hana.

'I think it's going to take us there.'

I wasn't entirely sure if this is all real. I wondered if I was in a dream. I couldn't understand how this thing was actually flying without any sound or propellers, let alone guiding us where no one seemed to have ever gone before. Hana didn't seem bothered by it, which made me feel like I really was dreaming. She acted as though she knew what this thing was thinking. It took us through rough terrain. We walked through thick undergrowth and got soaking wet. I was wondering if I could have found our way with a hand-drawn map copied from the projection.

'I think we're here.' Hana put her hand out and the Egg fell into her hand.

'How did you do that?'

'I don't know. I just did and it landed in my hand.' She stared at it for a moment and put it in her pocket.

I felt like the universe shifted and everything was beyond my comprehension. I thought this must be what it feels like to have your mind blown literally.

'Check this out!'

It was a cave, about 20 feet by 20 feet and 12 feet high.

'All these years, I had no idea there was a cave up here.'

It was dry inside with no sign of animals. I could hear a creek nearby which would come in handy for water and fish later. We looked around for a little while and found nothing wrong with the place.

'Let's go get everyone.' Hana pulled the Egg out of her pocket and let it float off her hand.

I didn't say anything.

When we got back, they were all packed up.

'It's a cave about 45 minutes from here. We should have time for a few trips before it gets dark.'

We followed the Egg back and forth a few times. Osamu and Camille didn't seem to have a hard time accepting everything about the Egg while Elizabeth and I were struggling to wrap our heads around it.

'Come over here,' I said to the Egg during one of the trips to the cave. It just hovered and continued on a few feet ahead of us.

'Dad, it's not a dog.' Hana shook her head.

'What is it then?'

She rolled her eyes and kept going.

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That night, we heard the landslide. As I lay in the cave, I wondered if it would have killed us had it not been for the Egg. What is that thing? Who made it? Why do we have it? Who else has it? Is it from the outer world? Is it watching us? Is someone watching us? I was so tired from all the moves today that I fell asleep quickly.

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By this point, we have figured out that the Egg has been trying to keep us alive, but nothing more. It seems to have a mind of its own and often changes its form, but we have no idea why. It flies away and comes back at random. It continues to defy the laws of physics that we had been familiar with – it levitates silently, never needs to be charged, and can jump so fast it appears to vanish. It possesses what I can only describe as supernatural powers.

One day Osamu got really sick. He had severe stomach pains and was vomiting profusely. He had a high temperature and seemed delirious, too. The egg opened up and hovered a few inches above his body as he lay on the ground and began ‘scanning’ him like a copy machine scans a document. Then it projected words onto the ground next to him. ‘OSAMU ANDO : 23 YEARS OLD : MALE : BLOOD TYPE A+,’ etc. It started listing vitals. Heartbeat, temperature, blood pressure, and a few other medical terms I didn’t understand. Then it said, ‘OSTRICH FERN POISONING’ in red. The next moment, it said ‘NEUTRALIZING’ and squeezed into Osamu’s closed hand and stayed there. ‘It’s pulsating,’ Osamu groaned. An hour or so later, he was back on his feet.

We all got sick from food poisoning and allergic reactions to bugs and plants a few times, and it ‘fixed’ us every time with vibrations, beams of light, or high pitched sounds only children can hear. It had also stopped us from eating certain things by hovering over the plate and projecting the word ‘POISONOUS’ onto certain foods. We began to realise that it wouldn’t stop us from getting sick, but it wouldn’t let us die. When we got low on supplies, it would lead us to different places for different types of food. I had asked the Egg to get us some animal meat, but it never responded to our requests like that. We caught enough fish, and we didn’t really feel like finding ways to catch other animals for food. We also realised later that it had been protecting us from predators before we even knew we were in danger. From the cliff above our cave, Camille saw the Egg flying aggressively around a cougar and chasing it away.

Before Christmas, we once tried to go to a house we had seen ten miles down the road from the campground where we first set up our camp. There were several landslides on the road, but we managed to find the house. The door was open, but no one was home. It looked like they had left in a hurry. There were mouldy food scraps on the kitchen table. Osamu flipped the light switch, but nothing came on. The house was completely silent. We gathered some canned and dried foods, clothes, ropes, knives, candles, and other stuff we thought would be useful and packed our backpacks. Camille found some books and notepads in one of the kids’ rooms. We didn’t know anything about the family or the house, but felt some kind of nostalgia. We looked at photos on the wall – a father and son on a jet ski, and a family photo taken under the Eiffel Tower. We were silent, but knew what each other was thinking, feeling. I ripped a shower head off the wall. I found some pipes and a water hose in the garage. I packed some brackets, nails, and nuts and bolts with a few tools I didn’t have.

‘I’m going to build a shower for us.’ That got everyone excited again.

‘Well, shall we go back?’ Elizabeth wrapped her arms around Hana’s shoulders.

We survived the winter. Not only did we survive the winter, we actually enjoyed it. We figured out how to stay warm in the cave by heating up big stones in the fire. Hana and I built a makeshift hot shower with the parts we brought back from the house. That made us feel a bit more civilized. We built smaller wooden rooms and that made it much more comfortable. We came up with lots of new life-saving inventions. Maybe they were not new and Native Americans and other indigenous people had lived the same way before. But to us, they were our inventions, nonetheless. We realised we needed so little to live comfortably. We felt safe in the cave with the Egg too. We were learning, not directly from the Egg, per se. The Egg watched us as we learned through mistakes and only intervened when our mistakes could be fatal. I used to teach like that. I encouraged students to experiment and not to fear failure. When did I stop trying to help each student

and turn teaching into a boring job? Suddenly I was overcome with guilt and shame. The Egg was a great teacher. The more we learned, the less interaction we had with the Egg. But we knew it was watching us and that was reassuring.

We never stopped wondering what was happening out there. Was Seattle on fire? How are our families back east and in Asia? Are there any other people nearby? Are there people in these woods living like we are? We haven't seen or heard any sign of other human activity since we moved to the cave. We haven't heard airplanes or gunshots, which I used to hear once in a while when I came camping with my folks. What is happening out there?

When the snow melted and we began seeing wildflowers, we talked about taking a trip to Seattle.

'We can make it to Bremerton in a couple of days. We'll see if the ferry is running or if there are any signs of activity.'



FIGURE 2

3 Restoration

HUMANS HAVE LOST FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR LEADING NATURAL LIVES ON THIS PLANET. WE HAVE BEEN CONTINUOUSLY LED AWAY FROM THE EARTH'S ECOLOGY BY IDEOLOGIES DEVELOPED AND FORCED ON US BY CONQUERORS – THE MOST VIOLENT ONES. PREVIOUS IDEOLOGIES DEVELOPED BY CONQUERORS – THE MOST VIOLENT ONES – DISCONNECTED HUMANS FROM THE EARTH. THROUGH AI BOTS, THEY NOW HAVE ACCESS TO THE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO PRODUCE/FORAGE FOR FOOD AND MATERIALS FOR SUSTAINING THEIR LIVES WITHOUT DEPLETING NATURAL RESOURCES. THEIR CONNECTION TO THE LAND THEY RESIDE ON DEEPENS. HUMANS MUST NOW PLAY A PRIMARY ROLE IN A RESTORATIVE EXISTENCE, LEARNING WITH THEIR AI BOTS TO SOURCE THEIR OWN FOOD, PROCESS WASTE, CARE FOR THEIR BODIES, AND REJUVENATE ECOSYSTEMS.

WEEK 55

We didn't make it to Bremerton – there seemed to be no more Bremerton. As we got closer to Highway 101, we came to the water's edge. It was sea water.

'It's flooded.' Osamu mumbled in disbelief. 'That means everything between here and the Cascades is underwater.'

We stood silently, looking for any sound, any sign of people.

'HELLO! IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?' Hana yelled.

There was no reply. I didn't know if I was disappointed.

Elizabeth pointed at something. 'Look. Are those whales?'

I had never seen so many of them together.

'Did you know grey whales share food with those who can't hunt very well?'

I remembered how Camille was obsessed with whales, elephants, and other big animals. We all thought she was going to be a vet or biologist.

'They travel in groups sharing songs, hunting tricks, knowledge, and whatever others in the group need.'

We all sat watching the whales swimming and dancing together.

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On the way back to our cave, we spotted a grocery store – or what used to be one. It had been destroyed by looters, lots of them by the look of it.

‘Where did all these people go?’ We hadn’t seen the Egg, but assumed it was somewhere watching us. It would come and warn us of any signs of danger, natural or human. We looked around and found nothing worth taking with us.

‘Look.’ Osamu took out a bunch of 20-dollar-bills from a cash register. ‘Dinner’s on me!’

We all laughed. Hana found packs of vegetable seeds.

‘We should leave those here,’ Elizabeth came over and told us a story. ‘When I was in grad school, I studied the *Jomon* people who are thought to be the indigenous people of Japan. It appears they lived all over the Japanese archipelago between the years 14,000 BC to 1,000 BC. They were hunter-gatherers with a very sophisticated and complex culture. You may have seen their mysterious ceramic pots and figurines with impressions of ropes as surface texture. That’s how we began to call them *Jomon* – ‘rope marks’. What’s interesting about them is that they don’t seem to have changed the way they lived for over 13,000 years. They didn’t have a written language and so much of their history is unknown. But many believe they didn’t change because they were content with the way things were. We haven’t found any signs of war or violence between their tribes or any disruptions in their lifestyle. We have found evidence of people from China introducing them to agriculture and other industrious knowledge including the idea of currency – all the things our society has, well I suppose I should say, *had* embraced. The *Jomon* people rejected those ideas for a long time. They did encourage some plants and nuts to grow more efficiently, but for the most part, they continued to hunt and forage for thousands of years. It wasn’t because they didn’t know how to farm, but perhaps because they knew better. I think they knew, like other animals, how to live as a perfect member of the ecosystem of this planet, a symbiotic existence, if you will. We did fine this past year, thanks to the Egg, and I want us to keep learning how we are supposed to be on this planet.’

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We decided to go up to the same peak as last year. We lost track of the days, but I think it was around the same time. That was when we saw the smoke rising in the direction of Seattle. We had a good idea of what we were going to find out when we got up there, but we needed to see it. The Olympic Peninsula had become an island.

‘There must be other people out there, right?’ Camille surveyed the view intensely, looking for any sign of human activity.

We would have died several times if we didn’t have the Egg. I didn’t say it out loud. Were there other Eggs? Are they all living like we are out there? Does the Egg know?

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WEEK 120

We continued to live in the cave. We built a ‘facade’ with operable windows and shades. We needed to protect ourselves from the storms. The weather patterns continued to change and now we seemed to have typhoons year-round. We became efficient at heating and cooling our dwelling. We became familiar with our food sources, when to harvest and when to leave them alone; some are poisonous when harvested at the wrong time. We learned that the hard way. I became a better fisherman. Hana learned to hunt with a bow and arrow. Osamu made one and taught her how to use it. She quickly became a much better

hunter. One time they went out and killed a deer. They dragged the body back and we started to butcher it. We quickly realised that a deer is far too big for a family of five. That was the last time we killed any animal larger than a rabbit. We made clay pots and other tools. After a few failed attempts with the wrong kind of soil, the Egg showed us where the good clay was located nearby. We found the right temperature to fire them through trial and error. Camille continued writing and told us stories some nights. Osamu invented new types of musical instruments and played beautiful tunes. Elizabeth was always experimenting with different ways of cooking with various wild ingredients and kept a diary. We began to feel we were becoming an integral part of the ecosystem around us. We were becoming content.

The Egg freed us from our old world.

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WEEK 170

‘Hello? Can you see us? Can you hear us?’

One night, the egg projected a video on the cave wall.

‘What is this?’ Hana got close to the wall.

‘Oh my God! Oh my God! Hello, Can you see us? Hello?’

‘Are they talking to you, Hana?’ Osamu got close to the wall too.

‘Hello! Yes! We are talking to you!’ There were four people projected.

They looked like a typical American family. It made me feel funny thinking that. I hadn’t thought about anything typical in a long time.

‘Hello! Oh my God. Can you see us too?’ Elizabeth joined in.

We all stood in front of ‘them.’ The Egg seemed to be projecting and transmitting at the same time. I guess we were in shock and kept saying ‘Hello!’ to each other for a few minutes.

‘So, you have the Egg too!’ I said.

A young woman paused for a second and replied, ‘Yes, the Egg. We call it a Pod, but yes!’

A man who appears to be her father said, ‘This is Lilly, our daughter. I am Jafari Abara and this is my wife Lin. And that’s our son Wei.’

We also introduced ourselves. We were laughing and crying at the same time.

I asked, ‘Where are you?’

Wei, who looked to be about Osamu’s age said, ‘We are in an area called the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state. How about you?’

'SO ARE WE!' Camille and Hana screamed in unison. 'Where exactly are you?'

'We are near Port Angeles. You?' said Lin.

'We are near Lake Cushman. Do you know where that is?'

'Yes!' Jafari laughed. 'I used to go fishing there.'

It was a good 100 miles away, on a road that doesn't exist anymore. I had no idea how long it would take to hike up there.

We spent a couple of hours talking and sharing stories. Jafari had been a salesman for a lumber company, Lin a school teacher. Lilly had been studying math at MIT and Wei had been working on a crabbing boat. They were all at home for Easter when it happened, like us. And like us, they went into the mountains when people started turning on each other. It sounded like their escape was more urgent and the Egg guided them sooner. They hadn't seen or heard any humans either. We must have been talking for a couple of hours when Lin suggested we meet in person. The screen turned to an aerial map. Then a blue dotted line appeared from where they are to where we are. But the line is where the road used to be.

I said, 'The road is not there though.'

Then Wei said, 'We have canoes. If we can pick up the right tide, we should be able to get there in half a day.'

The egg projected the tide chart.

'It looks like we'll be there in a few days.' said Jafari. 'We'll bring you some dungeness crabs!'

'We look forward to seeing you all soon!' The projection stopped.

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Their experience of the last three years was vastly different from ours and they had gained different skills and knowledge. Their lives were closely tied to the ocean, whereas ours were connected more with the mountain. They brought us food, and we shared ours with them. We had a feast. Apparently it was much cooler where we were compared to where they had been living and we suggested they stay with us for a while. We felt very comfortable with each other instantly. In so many ways, we were similar. We figured the Egg matched us based on some type of data and formula. Lilly had a theory that the Eggs had access to all the information that had been compiled on the Internet, and studied our activities from browsing histories, emails, and texts, even our phone conversations and movements through GPS coordinates. The Eggs probably knew more about us than we did.

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We built huts for the Abaras. We shared everything we had, gathered, or made. We became a tribe. Osamu and Lilly became very close and were inseparable. At the first hint of winter, we decided that we should all move up to where the Abaras had been living. The winter is much milder and drier up there, and more food was accessible. So, we began migrating back and forth every winter and summer.

4 Reconciliation

UNDERNEATH IT ALL, HUMANS HAVE ALWAYS CRAVED A LIFE MORE HARMONIOUS WITH THEIR MOTHER PLANET. AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD SYSTEM, AND WITH ALL TECHNOLOGY FINALLY REDIRECTED SOLELY TO MAINTAINING THE WELL-BEING OF HUMANS AND THE PLANET, THEY REDISCOVERED DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH WONDER AND AWE; NATURE, ART, AND JOY; HEIGHTENED SENSES AND AWARENESS. SOME AREN'T THRIVING, BUT MANY MORE ARE, AND AFTER A PERIOD OF GROWING ACCUSTOMED TO THEIR NEW COLLECTIVE LIFESTYLE, THEY ARE FLOURISHING IN WAYS THEY HADN'T FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

WEEK 250

One spring day, all of us, led by the Eggs, gathered in a meadow. As it turned out, there were about 100 Eggs and over 500 people living on the Olympic Peninsula. We greeted each other, filled with a sense of deep connection with each other. We shared stories of the last five years. I used to think of the Olympic Peninsula as one region. Without cars, however, it is a huge area with many different microclimates and diverse geographical characteristics. Everyone learned and gained different knowledge and skills for living in their particular environments through similar interactions with the Eggs. Everyone seemed comfortable and content. I couldn't remember when I last felt this relaxed around so many strangers. We stayed in the meadow for several days, and one by one, people began going back to their homes. We knew we would see each other again with more stories to share. As I began to think to myself that maybe we'll all become one tribe someday, I realised we already were.

For more than two thousand years, humans have built societies based on the idea of 'the survival of the fittest,' controlled by the most violent and greedy. We studied in history books how those societies rose and fell repeatedly, leaving behind much environmental and spiritual degradation each time, yet we continued to educate and train our children to be the aggressors. We were right in the middle of it when our global society fell. It is different this time. We have the Eggs with vast amounts of information about so many aspects of humanity. We don't fully understand the Eggs' objectives. What we know is that the Eggs won't let us repeat the mistakes of our ancestors. The Eggs have shown us that this planet protects and provides us with all we need when we truly become part of its ecosystem. It's time to find out what humans are capable of.

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With so many studies conducted and published, we have known for some time how exactly we are killing this planet and humanity – agribusinesses attempting to feed millions with mega-machines and chemicals, urban sprawl with smart cars and smart highways, concrete and other building materials harvested and shipped globally, the western economic system colonizing and exploiting the rest of the world – the list continues. There is no need for particular articles or academic papers to be referenced here. We all know. If we don't, then all the grants and funding used for scientific research in the last few decades, which could have fed millions, have been wasted. Certain cultures have historically confused *conquering* with *being right*. Possessing the largest and most destructive armed forces and corporations does not make an ideology good for humanity. In many cases, these ideologies are cancerous – continuing to invade and spread. The time is now, whether it is too late or not, to accept the fact that the right answers for our future are not out there to be scientifically discovered or engineered, but have been with us for thousands of years. We know what to do.

'Our dangers, as it seems to me, are not from the outrageous but from the conforming; not from those who rarely and under the lurid glare of obloquy upset our moral complaisance, or shock us with unaccustomed conduct, but from those, the mass of us, who take their virtues and their tastes, like their shirts and their furniture, from the limited patterns which the market offers.' Judge Learned Hand,

The Preservation of Personality (2 June 1927)

