

*Well, the ecological collapse has begun, and you heard it here first. The evidence is mounting too fast, and the cautionary voices have been overridden or ignored.*

*All you have to do is read the news, wherever you get it.*

*The Greenland ice mass is melting faster than expected. The amount of CO2 in the atmosphere is past the point where even if all human activity stopped today, the planet would continue to warm well past any historical norms. The dead zones and algae blooms are increasing in the oceans. Excess CO2 is manifesting itself in the increasing acidity of the oceans. Weather volatility is increasing. There is more, but that's enough to start.*

*The impact of our sheer numbers is overwhelming the ability of the planet to cleanse itself. The impact of our sheer numbers is affecting the ability of other life forms to survive and thrive. The elasticity of the delicate balance that is our biosphere is stretched and ready to break.*

*When it does, the ecological shift will be so rapid, and so severe that most species, including ours, will be unable to adapt. And the truth is, there is nothing we can do about it. Short of mass-suicide, and even that has a less than even chance of working.*

*I cry wolf, you say. It's not that bad, you say. Technology will save us, our ingenuity will find a way, God or aliens will save us...*

*I cry wolf, you say. These are just isolated things, there is plenty of time, we can still save the day if we recycle, reduce our emissions, switch to hydrogen, wind, solar....*

*And you say, where is your evidence? Do I need another scientific study? More data points? What for?*

*Evidence? I sniff the wind. I taste the water, and the earth. I feel the storm coming, like any wild thing. Because you see, I am enough of a wild thing to know. A wild thing knows, because it*

*lives and feels the fabric of the wild of which it is a part. A wild thing has every sense tuned to threat and profit and its environment in order to survive.*

*And WE have lost that, lost that touch with the land and the water and the other wild things. WE have lost our way, and our sense and our bearings.*

*Even one hundred years ago, we lived closer to the land. That land supported us, and we knew its riches and its dangers and its limits. We knew that a piece of land could only support so many cattle, or grow so much corn or wheat.*

*Just one hundred years ago there were few automobiles, no airplanes, no globe spanning web of oil tankers and pipelines. There were just over a billion and a half people. Now there are 6 billion, soon to be 9 billion.*

*Just one hundred years ago, most of us could walk outside in the night and look up at the stars and know there was something vast and mysterious above us that made us humble. Now the glare of our lights and our videos keeps us walled in light, trapped in our self-referential hall of mirrors.*

*Once, there was enough silence that we could hear other voices than our own. We could hear when a wolf howled in the far hills. Now all we hear is our own voices, and we think that that is all there is.*

*Cry wolf? No, I cry coyote. Coyote is here. Now.*

*Coyote gets into trouble because of his desires. Like Coyote, we cannot keep our dicks in our pants, our wombs empty, and our cleverness at bay. It's really that simple. When the collapse comes, it will not be because God is angry with us, or because Satan has worked evil. It will be because this is who we are, clever animals who could not control their appetites.*

*We are not the crown of creation. We are dependent on a complex web of energy and life forms that has taken millions of years to evolve itself and us together. We exist and survive only because that web supports our complexity. We stand on the shoulders of billions of years and billions of organisms, and we think that we are giants.*

*The logic is simple. Infinite growth in a closed system is impossible. Growth cannot be sustained in any ecology past the limits of those factors necessary for growth.*

*In the coyote stories, Coyote usually ends up dead. That's probably how this coyote story will end. That's the way of it. Coyote never learns. Never. That's why he's Coyote.*

*Some part of me hopes blindly that the collapse will not occur. There is much here that I love: art, movies, friends, the view from the airplane window seat, the ability to drive to the mountains and the sea. The books and the internet. Clean sheets and hot showers.*

*And perhaps those things will still exist in one hundred years, but they will probably not exist for 9 billion of us. The carrying capacity of the planet is being rapidly degraded, and we'll be lucky to sustain a billion people in one hundred years.*

*But the collapse is coming. I feel it my bones. Any social measures to limit our populations would be antithetical to our nature. And we are too much Coyote to stop being clever and to stop being what we are. And this is who we are.*

*Perhaps it is disaster that will change us. Perhaps despair and loss will finally snap us out of our self-involvement. Hard to say. I have little hope that religion will steer us from this course, much less science and our supposed rationality. Religion has not gone far enough, and science does not know where to go. And anyway, the juggernaut is unstoppable at this point.*

*Boy, that was a real bummer of a blog post, wasn't it? The whole thing has been tearing me up for months. I've been horribly depressed. But you know what? I decided to whistle past the graveyard and not get sucked into that anymore. Nothing I can do about it.*

*It's just Coyote. It's that way. It's a dream rising and falling. All things are impermanent. We were born to die. After death, we'll see. Maybe something, maybe nothing. Anyone who says they know is a liar.*

*In the meantime, keep conserving, keep recycling, keep working for change. Maybe we can't stop the collapse, but maybe we can keep the aftermath from being worse. Love the sacred earth. Stay compassionate. Help each other. Love all beings. Teach your children Coyote stories, and what they really mean.*

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I wrote those words some 15 years ago. They still ring true.

When I wrote those words, atmospheric CO2 was at roughly 383 ppm. World population was 6.6 billion.

On the first Earth Day in 1970, atmospheric CO2 was 328.13 ppm. World population was 3.6 billion. And today, atmospheric CO2 is at roughly 420 ppm. World population is 7.9 billion. Those numbers show no sign of stopping, much less decreasing.

The last time CO2 levels rose this high, this quickly, most of the life on the planet was wiped out.

Just two days ago, the news came in that just 3% of Earth's land-based ecosystems remain intact. Goddess knows the real state of our waters, but it isn't much better. The data from every quarter is terrifying, and the reports from the ground are bitter witness to the destruction we have wrought. 70% of our wildlife is gone. I can't go on.

The original Earth Day felt like a celebration. It had purpose and vision, and hope. I know, I was around.

Earth Day now feels to me like a cruel joke, an exercise in greenwash. The Sierra Club is still telling me to plant a tree, while selling me an Earth Day T-shirt, and promoting \$5000 trips to far off lands. The shops are having Earth Day sales. Which means more plastic for the recycle bin. Recycling – another hoax. Don't even get me started on the false promise of electric cars.

Not only have we failed to slow the juggernaut of human civilization, things have gotten much, much worse in the fifty-one years since that first Earth Day. The consequences of our failure are enormous. It's best to face up to that with rigorous honesty.

The storm is here, and it's only going to get fiercer. I wish I had some sage advice about how to weather it, but I have none.

The writer Deena Metzger had a realization in 2019, and I'll share an edited, very condensed version with you:

*We are all going extinct.*

*The animals know this and now all humans know this as well. Sensing the imminent death of all species, the cellular understanding of our common fate is making us ill. Our nervous and physical systems cannot bear this terrible knowledge. The growing understanding of the reality of the human caused 6th Extinction is resulting in Extinction Illness.*

*Contemplating the extent and pervasiveness of despair and violence across the globe, the increasing aberrance of human and non-human behavior, I see that all humans and non-humans know this, all human people and all beings, animals, trees, birds, insects, fish, know this. And all of us are being driven to some form of madness, pain, or dysfunction. For the animals, Bear, Wolf, Elephant, Whale this results in unavoidable and unmediated terror. We*

*humans know, with or without awareness, that we are responsible. And so, we, entirely crazed, become a species that commits ecocide even as we die of it. The different signs and symptoms are ubiquitous and no one is escaping it.*

*We know we are going extinct. We know this consciously and/or unconsciously. Each person on the planet knows this. Extinction is upon us and no one is immune to it. All beings sense our/their imminent death. Not only their individual deaths, but far worse, the death of their species. An unbearable thought. And beyond that, the death of all species ....*

*Extinction is our fault. First, we must recognize our condition and then admit we have caused this crisis, that we continue to create it. We are responsible.*

*Extinction Illness is an iconic auto-immune disease: the species attacks itself and all life is threatened. The only healing for Extinction, and so Extinction Illness, as they are entirely intertwined, is stopping Extinction. The only healing for Extinction Illness is changing our lives to stop Extinction.*

*But deep self-scrutiny of the illness and its causes can reveal, as is the case, again, with other life-threatening illnesses, which paths lead to healing and the restoration of vitality. There are old medicines and medicine ways that can be revived. Indigenous peoples whose ways and culture are not responsible for this tragedy, though they suffer it, know something of the values, approaches, lived ways that can mitigate what is otherwise our grim fate. Deep immersion in and attention to and unconditional love of the natural world are necessary pathways. There are other ways we can find but none will be effective unless we willingly, ruthlessly and essentially change our lives.*

*There it is. Unless we willingly, ruthlessly and essentially change our lives.*

We thought we could have our planet and eat it too. We dithered and denied and delayed, and now the roads to the future have narrowed to a single path, steep and rocky. We have few choices left if we are to have any kind of future at all.

But you know what? It's ok if we go extinct. Accepting that is the first step to being at peace with the now inevitable. Everything rises, and everything falls away, and we are no exception.

As it ever was, how we live is the important thing. Let us grieve, let us love, let us be kind, let us help others through the difficult times ahead. Don't forget to laugh. Don't forget to dance.

I don't know what else to say.