



Plan B

The View From Heifer Hill—November 2020

I am at my club, The Beaver Lodge, in a post-election funk. I don't need to tell you how high the stakes for this election were. Like Indiana Jones in the intro to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, we were sliding for the gap beneath the descending stone door. If Jones didn't make it, he would be trapped in a temple of deadly horrors. In our case, we would be trapped, with all of the rest of the planet's precious life, to face melting ice caps, unbearable heatwaves, and ecological unraveling.

If we made it under that door, with a green wave of voters, the government would be fully empowered to enact meaningful legislation to curb climate change. I even imagined, in a bout of unguarded optimism, we might discover the route to social justice and world peace on the far side of the election.

I write with results still pending, but with the Senate likely still controlled by climate change deniers, I feel the reverberations of the slamming door before my outstretched fingers. "What shall I do?" I asked Pumpkin and Curly, "Buy up future beach-front property in Vernon and settle back to watch the end times?" Pumpkin and Curly have little patience for talk of politics. They are too young to vote, and besides, they're beavers. They don't understand English. Pumpkin whined and batted at my hands. Curly gave me a huff of annoyance.

Then I remembered. There's another way out of the Greenhouse of Doom. It is likely to be uncomfortable and dangerous, and I'm not sure how to find it. Fortunately, I'm not trapped in here alone. There are plenty of people with more smarts than I have stuck here too. If we each roll up our sleeves and find

the place where we can best contribute to the work, we still have a chance. Do you want to join up with people who have been exploring alternative routes out of this predicament? Look to the inspiring work of 350.org and [Extinction Rebellion](http://ExtinctionRebellion.org).

Pumpkin and Curly were born to mitigate climate change. They are in training to slow the course of water across the landscape. Their dams will allow surface water to fill aquifers and raise the water table, causing a local cooling effect. Peat will build up in the wetlands they create, storing carbon for ages.

Nature has many great ways to remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it. Scientists have identified how we can maximize these processes. In an October 2017 article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, researchers found that natural solutions can provide more than a third of the mitigation needed to keep warming below 2 °C. Among the measures considered important was conserving and restoring wetlands. Raising these builders of wetlands is one of my small contributions to climate stability.

Curly heads into the pool and grabs the net I left in there when I was cleaning. She wrestles it to the top of the pool ramp and drops it over the side. She then studies it, seizes it in her teeth again, and shoves it slightly to the left. The club will soon have a dam. Good work, Curly!

