



Future Justice

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Scared To See What Happens

Esther Khoo

Dear Sister Mars,

When the tough gets going, the going gets tough. I've been feeling ill and queasy, being forced to eat junk and overflow with trash. I feel terrible, but nobody seems to care. I know you do, and that's why I'm writing to you. You were always a close friend, one who has seen my pain through all these years.

It's been ghastly these past few years. You know I used to have a perfect complexion: baby blue spread all over me, with patches of green and brown adding to the colour. Now, I've tanned unhealthily, with all the exposure to sun as holes break in the atmosphere. My skin's dark as smoke, and smog clings constantly. Roses which bloom red now have a layer of dirt, and the white frangipanis aren't as white as they used to be. It's uncomfortable to feel so dirty all the time. Even when the rain showers down on me, it's mixed with dust and particles. Not cleansing at all. Even the clear waters have lost their mirror-like quality.

The thing which hurts me the most is that humans are too caught up with globalisation and technology. In trying to improve themselves, they forget to weigh out the consequences. Modern technology owes ecology a major apology. Gigantic factories and numerous vehicles keep spewing choking black soot all over my face. It's so difficult to breathe,

ESTHER KHOO

asthma regularly attacks me. 'When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.' I can't breathe deep and long: I keep gasping. The constant smoke screen makes me stink.

I'm going through hot flushes and sweating non-stop. It's similar to what humans term 'menopause', but this isn't due to age. None of this is. I don't like to blame people, but they really aren't taking care of me. I almost feel mistreated. My ice caps are melting in both poles. I try to stop, to cool down, but I can't. I cringe in horror as I create waves that crash violently, and raise the sea levels. I'm liquefying so rapidly that I can't help but wash away my cute penguins and huge polar bears. The weird thing is that I'm flooding on one side, but as dry as a desert on the other. It's an odd response and I can't seem to balance it out.

When there is such a climate change as this, my people starve as the food production destabilises. When I lose control of the rainfall patterns and temperature, crops refuse to grow. Then, because of the change, natural wonders, such as the Great Barrier Reef, are being damaged, affecting the whole ecosystem. The worrying thing is that humans know why this is happening, but they aren't putting in enough effort or acting fast enough to stop it. I'm really worried.

Eleven of the past twelve years have been ranked as the warmest twelve years in the history of the world so far. The doctors have narrowed the cause to carbon emissions. All the heat has driven me to a high fever. The bushfires that have ravaged Victoria in Australia have partially been fanned by the recent climate change. It's horrifying seeing fire spread rapidly, devouring the leaves of the trees and plants, leaving a path of destruction. Some animals have even had all their fur burnt off them, leaving only the bare skin. People have died. It's hard to accept that I can be so destructive.

Recently, I had a tiny bit of respite, just a single hour of bliss heaven. I've never been so glad of the dark before. On 28 March this year, many around the world switched off their

lights in support of global warming. It was one of the few times I could actually look around and enjoy the stars without being blinded by the spotlights of huge landmarks. The lighting of the Sydney Opera House, Taipei 101, Petronas Twin Towers, Eiffel Tower and so many others are beautiful, but I think star lights outshine them all. The event was a smashing success and it gives me a glimmer of hope that humans still care. They should do this more often!

I guess there are still flashes of hope here and there. 'Corporate Social Responsibility' seems to be the 'in' phrase with many big companies now. It's their way of giving back to me and trying to undo the damage. Everyone wants to appear to go 'green', but sometimes I wonder if they really mean it. Is it just another way to ease a guilty conscience? Or do they do it just to attract crowds as a marketing gimmick? It's so hard to tell. They do take baby steps to try to reduce their huge carbon footprints, which obviously does not work out.

I've been overhearing an awful lot of bad news, my humans are looking at possibilities to make you their home, and you'll end up just like me. Don't let them! Hide all your rivers, sources of water, sources of life. Don't let them touch you! You've seen how much I've suffered as a mother who loves them. They don't seem to care about me anymore. It's not your responsibility to take care of them as an aunt either. I do love them, but I care about you too. It's too painful.

Mars, I just want to thank you for listening to all my woes and understanding. Yes, climate change has devastated my planet. I'm scared to see what happens to tomorrow, scared to wake up one day and find that I've overheated and killed everybody in the process. Still, humans have started to realise and are taking action now. There's still hope for a green tomorrow. Take care, Mars.



Esther Khoo wrote this in 2009 when she was in Year 11 at Sydney Girls High School in New South Wales.