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## FOREWORD

About five billion years ago, something wonderful happened—the Big Brother of an explosion released the potential of both matter and energy from the bondage of crushing gravity, setting the Solar System into motion and providing both you and me with a home hurtling through space at 67,000 miles (108,000 km) every hour...wow! We call it Planet Earth.

The orbit of this, our galactic spaceship, determined that the heat beaming in from the Sun warmed the surface of our lonely planet just enough to allow water to exist as a gas circulating in the atmospheric blanket.

As far as we know, no other planet was blessed in this way. In consequence, water—the universal catalyst—slowly but surely covered the Earth with a mantle of living green.

The first Titans of this process, which I like to call “creative evolution,” were microscopic bacteria and tiny half plant-half animals called algae. They charged the atmosphere with oxygen and fed the nascent soils with nitrogen-rich fertilizer, creating an hospitable environment for life in the frigid nothingness of space.

Thanks to these teeming hordes, the last 600 million years saw a panoply of ever larger plants and animals take their place servicing the biosphere while keeping its environment in balance.

Only in the year 2008 did the environment become just right for a group of creative primates to publish this great book.

Read it with care and then, in the knowledge that Earth is the only home our children and grandchildren are going to inherit, I beg you to treat it with the care it deserves.

The only advice I can offer is in the words of Tom Lehrer, a mathematician who named the names of every one of the building blocks that make up planet Earth in a song—when it comes to anything Mother Earth slings your way, “don’t be scared, be prepared.” *Homo sapiens* may disappear from Earth, but that is the way of “creative evolution.”

**DAVID BELLAMY, BOTANIST, 2008**



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