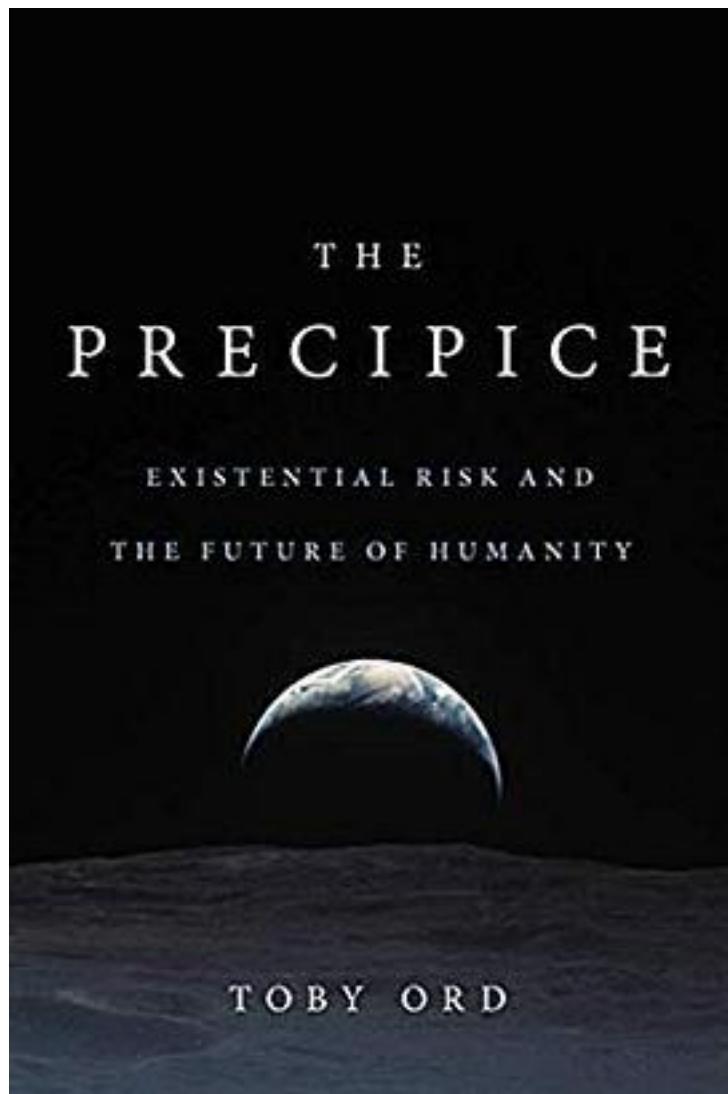


The Precipice



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"Kate," she announced, "you look like a kind eagle." "A wounded one, then, Honora." "You've a story for me, I see. Sit down and tell it." So Kate told it, compelling the history of her humiliating failure to stand out before the calm, adjudging mind of her friend. "But oughtn't we to forgive everything to the old?" cried Honora at the conclusion of the recital. "Oh, is father old?" responded Kate in anguish. "He doesn't seem old -- only formidable. If I'd thought I'd been wrong I never would have come up here to ask you to sustain me in my obstinacy. Truly, Honora, it isn't a question of age. He's hardly beyond his prime, and he has been using all of his will, which has grown strong with having his own way, to break me down the way most of the men in Silvertree have broken their women down. I was getting to be just like the others, and to start when I heard him coming in at the door, and to hide things from him so that he wouldn't rage. I'd have been lying next." "Kate" "Oh, you think it isn't decent for me to speak that way of my father You can't think how it seems to me -- how -- how irreligious But let me save my soul, Honora Let me do that" The girl's pallid face, sharpened and intensified, bore the imprint of genuine misery.

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