

Eternity



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Received wisdom says that our world is doomed, that we live in the End of Days. Our greed and profligacy will be the end of us, and of our planet, in very short order indeed. If not global warming, then supervolcanoes, meteoric impacts or nuclear war, bioterrorism or some natural plague will spell Armageddon. In fact there is a strong argument to be made that we may be around for a lot longer than most people think. Humans have, after all, already seen off several ice ages, gigantic volcanic eruptions and terrifying plagues. We may indeed be doomed -- but it is also at least possible that a long, difficult but ultimately rewarding future lies ahead of us. As for Planet Earth -- it has survived everything the Solar System (and its recent inhabitants) has thrown at it

for more than four and a half billion years. It is hard to see its story coming to an end anytime soon. So what will the future be like? What world will our descendents, if there are any, inhabit a thousand, ten thousand, a million years hence? What will happen to Earth in the millennia to come? How will our bodies, our minds, our societies change? Is our future the much-predicted one of flying cars, clones and robot slaves? Are we looking forward to a post-apocalyptic nightmare or something utterly weird and unforeseen? We do not know, but this provocative book attempts to sketch out a number of possibilities. Some futures are exciting, some are depressing; all take for granted that the one thing we know for certain about this universe is that time is not in short supply. Whatever happens, stuff will go on existing. The shape of things to come will be strange, and somewhat terrifying, but, like the present always does, it will seem banal to the people who inhabit it. Our future is in many ways bizarre, surreal and sometimes terrifying. The world of 10,000 years hence, let alone 100,000,000 years hence, will be strange and almost unrecognisable. But it will still be our world.

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