



★ **I Want a Better Catastrophe: Navigating the Climate Crisis with Grief, Hope, and Gallows Humor**

Andrew Boyd

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“Mass extinction and social collapse” are “a hard set of lemons to be making lemonade out of,” environmental activist Andrew Boyd admits. *I Want a Better Catastrophe* is his inventive, no-nonsense manual of constructive and philosophical responses to climate breakdown.

Here, the climate emergency is a “personal existential crisis for each of us.” While Boyd—the founder of creative protest measures including the Climate Clock and Climate Ribbon—is used to hoping against the odds and the evidence, this text strikes a somber tone. Humanity, he writes, is on a “path of profound grief,” and to cope with this “impossible new reality,” people will need the wisdom, rituals, and stories that literature and spiritual teachers offer.

In keeping with the theories of the Post-Carbon Institute, the book envisions four possible routes for the human future, two of them disastrous (denial and competition) and the others more promising (“powerdown”—a drastic scaling down of economies and sharing of what remains; and solidarity). Eight interviews spotlight scientists, campaigners, and gurus who have reckoned with the worst-case scenarios. Their approaches vary: evolutionary biologist Guy McPherson predicts imminent human extinction; activist Tim DeChristopher, who attended Harvard Divinity School, advocates rituals and pastoral care; Buddhist teacher Meg Wheatley advises an embrace of chaos and pain; and Indigenous botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer speaks of gratitude to the earth and heart experiments, like asking oneself, “What do you love too much to lose? And what are you going to do about it?”

Boyd’s wisecracking and sardonic attitude temper the sometimes gloomy predictions he’s bound to report. He views gallows humor as “cosmic defiance, a reframing.” Along with dialogues, he slots zany figures, thought experiments, and honest anecdotes into his imaginative framework.

I Want a Better Catastrophe may well be the most realistic yet least depressing end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it guide out there.

REBECCA FOSTER (January / February 2023)

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