

## Chapter 9

# Losing Everything to Save the World

### ABSTRACT

*In the authors' research, it was discovered that when people lose a little of their many possessions due to a disaster, they become unexpectedly upset as though they were cheated out of their share. This happens even if those who behave indignantly are otherwise nice people. They grumble over having to make repairs instead of being grateful to have survived. But curiously, when they lose absolutely everything to a disaster (even though one would expect them to be even more upset), they become surprisingly grateful instead (almost relieved). The authors propose that the unexpected indignation at losing a little is really just the habituation of gratitude coming out at last, because long ago a little was all humans had to lose. But as humans have too much to lose these days, it is hard to get back to the sense of losing everything. Extreme loss is required to rediscover extreme relief, and this requires letting natural outcomes determine when and where one loses everything—not by greater control of outcomes, but by broadening the idea of faith.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter about losing everything, the authors will show that imagining an outcome is not all that safe. This chapter will talk about things humans cannot control, and how a complete absence of human control often results in a more complete gratitude for having survived. The authors call this phenomenon the *Hurricane Survivor Effect*. This chapter will discuss extreme loss and extreme

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relief, and how there is more to the idea of faith in the future than simply enslaving that future so that it won't disappoint people. This chapter will ask the reader to imagine the abolition of differential treatment of Earth's species, and challenge the idea of courage, so that it includes taking unwise risks for something so beloved the idea of risk itself is suddenly attractive. Lastly, this chapter will challenge humanity's dearest assumptions to see if buried there in that biased certainty is the very antidote that might save the non-human world from an early death. Perhaps, the way to save a dying planet is to lose the very thing the human species is most afraid to lose (Meinecke, 2017).

## **FORCE MAJEURE**

Humans are obsessed with dominating outcomes. Humans do not like uncertainty—to them it is a sin, a mental deficit, or a crime not to predict and control one's personal outcomes (even if they are plainly outside one's control). And if there is any way to influence Fate, the human species will try to influence or modify Fate to favor its species (usually by offering up sacrifices to Chance; Meinecke, 2018a, 2018b). In fact, this obsession with favor does not stop at a species boundary, but goes on and on aggressively within the species too—so that even similar people who share the same region of the world (or live next door to each other) compete for political favor against their neighbors. Humans must know the future, and once humans know it, they must change that future, so it benefits them and nobody else. This way humans gain a “pawn-up” advantage, and in the end game, that little advantage helps humans out-survive their neighbors.

In spite of this need to know and control the future, humans cannot control everything. From the ancient practice of *haruspicy* (the reading of animal entrails) to the medical practice of autopsy (the inspection of human entrails), from the bizarre practice of augury (bird signs) to the modern science of meteorology (atmospheric signs), humans cannot always guess the future. The *scientific method* itself is founded on the idea that what is natural cannot be guessed or controlled (scientists call it randomness). So, though it may be crucial to social fitness to predict the future, there is a random gap in what humans can control; humans even have phrases for it. In law they call it Force Majeure; in the psychology of religion they call it God of the gaps; in the commercial need for indemnification from blame, they call it an Act of God (Gorsuch & Smith, 1983).

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