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Is the Earth the property of the generations which currently inhabit it? Can we humans abuse it and drain it of its resources without heeding the consequences? Sadly, we have already been acting in this thoughtless manner for many years, and if we continue, our children will be denied their inheritance of a beautiful and bountiful planet, and will instead emerge unto a barren wasteland.

Humanity's full capacity for waste and destruction emerged during the Industrial Revolution. Without understanding the disastrous consequences of their actions, people filled the air with pollution from their trains and factories, ravaged beautiful rainforests for fuel or building materials, and drilled further and further into the Earth's crust for oil. These industrial tycoons believed that they were on a treasure hunt, racing to collect as much of the Earth's bounty as possible, when they were in fact committing robbery.

As time has progressed, humans have continually tightened their strangling grip on the planet. The exponential increase in population has resulted in a skyrocketing demand for a dwindling supply of natural resources. Huge portions of the world's population are now unable to live without the technologies and products which have been purchased at such a steep environmental price. Unfortunately, these once plentiful resources are about to run out.

What will happen to the future generations who enter into a world in which these resources are necessary yet nonexistent? How will billions of people eat if factories are unable to produce enough food to fulfill their needs? How will they stay warm in frigid climates if there is no more fuel to burn? Most of us who are alive now will not need to answer these questions for ourselves, for our years will probably end before these terrible times bear down upon the rest of humanity. But to ignore these issues would be selfish and cruel, for our children and grandchildren would suffer. They would be forced to endure times of famine and war when resources are no longer available to everyone. Also, they will never be able to cherish the natural beauty of the world as it once was. Many diverse species of animals and plants will be driven into extinction if we continue to destroy our environment. There will be no more green, peaceful landscapes or clear, blue skies to gaze upon.

We cannot leave such a bleak and barren world to our descendants. There is still time to end our cycle of destruction. We can work to discover renewable resources and more environmentally-friendly technologies. Also, we can begin harvesting the energy of the sun and wind on a much larger scale. Even something as simple as using refillable water bottles instead of plastic or utilizing public transportation instead of driving will ultimately make a difference. If humanity can find a way to come together and make these changes, then we will be able to give our children the beautiful planet which they rightfully deserve.