

# Futures

## Change YourView

The world is just enough. By Matt Tighe



**F**ran always slowed in front of the long window. Beyond, the Earth was all blues and browns and white. You could even see a few of the remaining splotches of green.

From this far away the planet looked peaceful, rather than ravaged and close to dead.

As if agreeing, the client stopped to take in the view.

“What a mess,” he said. So, no, not so much with the agreeing.

“Sir,” Fran ventured. “You don’t want to keep YourView waiting.”

Running the little meeting station was a good gig. Keep your mouth closed, make sure the corporates were on time, civil to each other, and that things didn’t go sideways. Easy.

“I told you to call me Ruben,” the client said without looking away from the pillaged planet. He pointed down. Or out. Or whatever way it was.

“See that? The really deep green smear next to that big dead grey patch? That used to be called the Amazon. The lungs of the world. Can

you imagine? It was like one giant entity, pulsing with chemistry and biology. A biochemical marvel that cleaned the air, soil and water.”

“YourView owns most of that continent,” Fran replied, because everyone knew that, and she didn’t know anything about ancient history.

“Huh. Funny, isn’t it? One giant entity that has sucked the life out of another. It’s even worse than it looks from up here. We are very close to the end down there. Close enough, we think, for desperate acts.”

Fran gaped. She had not been supplied with Ruben’s background.

“Are you actually from Earth? From the Remnant?”

He smiled. “Yes. And yes, we do own the green that is left.” His smile widened into a grin that was at complete odds with his words. “For now.”

The main meeting room could hold an impressive number of corporate reps as well as their egos, but the YourView guy still seemed to

make the space feel small.

“I would like to know how you did it.”

So much for introductions. The man speaking made Fran’s skin itch. He smiled dryly. YourView. They had swallowed all of the old Internet and Hypernet platforms, and eventually quite a lot of everything else. There were few other companies that could rival them, and even the stupid old Lunar Government handled them with care. They knew just about everyone, as well as everyone’s business. Except Ruben’s, apparently.

Ruben smiled.

“Come now,” the YourView man said. “The Remnant hacked our systems with apparent ease. Which is impossible, yet you did it. Just for a meeting invite?” He smiled widely. “I assume this is a ransom announcement. You’ve demonstrated processing power we cannot combat.”

“It’s not a ransom,” Ruben said mildly. “It’s a giveaway. How would you like all of the Remnant’s green spaces?”

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It was so quiet that Fran could hear herself blink.

Earth was close to gutted, except for those pockets of green. Clean water, at least relatively. Untapped minerals. Wood. This was amazing. This was historical. This was horrific.

The YourView man cocked his head to one side and raised one eyebrow. "I'm more interested in your computing system."

This guy was being offered the last viable pieces of Earth, the last few drops of goodness in the sponge. And he wanted to talk about code.

"Our analysts have determined your processing power is close to what we need for quantum-fold travel."

Well, that made more sense. Fran said something both unprofessional and crude, but no one seemed to notice. Quantum folding had been theoretically possible for years, but no one had ever come close to having the computing force necessary to achieve it.

Ruben broke into a grin. "Yep. Expansion. New resources! Population growth! You are a

business, after all. And you can have access to the computing, too."

Finally, the corporate rep looked nonplussed. "I don't follow."

Ruben actually laughed, and Fran decided he was a lunatic. She wondered if she should initiate safety protocols.

"We would like YourView to take over not just the green, but all of Earth, and commit to its rehabilitation. You will have to buy out the few extractive industries you don't own, and it will be stewardship, not ownership. Similar management required for any living planet you might encounter in your eventual expansion, although you can mine the crap out of any asteroids or cold rocky planets you find. Oh, and the agreement will be in perpetuity, or as long as your soul-crushing parasitic company lasts. We have the contracts ready."

Yep, definitely a lunatic. The YourView man blinked a couple of times and then stood up. He glanced at Fran.

"I think we are done here."

"The green comes with our processing

capacity," Ruben said, and the YourView man stopped in the act of turning away.

"Well, actually, it is our processing capacity." Ruben's smile turned wistful. "Did you know that even centuries ago some trees sent signals to each other? Underground fungal networks, short range aerosols, even via classic allelopathy. Frankly, it was a mess, and highly inefficient. We decided the fungal pathway was most promising, but it still took centuries of tweaking. Years of species grafting and alignment followed by electrochemical speed improvements, all without compromising diversity or system resilience."

The YourView man sat back down. Fran did likewise.

"A living supercomputer," he breathed.

"Yep," Ruben said, and his smile turned hard. "Or it will be, once you help it grow."

**Matt Tighe** is an associate professor of ecosystem modelling at the University of New England, Australia, and an avid fan of horror, fantasy and science fiction.

## THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

**Matt Tighe** reveals the inspiration behind *Change YourView*.

Unlike some of my other stories, I know a fair bit of the science side of this one. But you don't need to spend every day working in this space to see the extent of environmental degradation all around us. It is hard not to be cynical, and I worry a lot about each declaration that we have gone beyond some point from which there is no turning back.

This story is a child of my anxiety. I wanted to say something about the resilience and perseverance of some people, and of the value inherent in what we have even when it has been declared broken or damaged. I also wanted to contrast that with the other side of how we function as a society.

I very much wanted this story to end on a hopeful note, but each time I read it I am more sure I did not scrub my cynicism away completely. I don't know what will happen with YourView and Ruben in the future, but I hope they have found at least a short-term fix.

