



A World for My Daughter: An Ecologist's Search for Optimism

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Alejandro Frid lives the life that many of us scientists wish we could. Fiercely devoted to his passions, he has not only earned scholarly accomplishments but also adventured and lived in landscapes about which the rest of us can only dream. On Yukon rivers, among the archipelagos of Haida Gwaii, and wild places in between, Frid's wide-eyed daughter, Twyla Bella, has been by his side. In *A World for My Daughter: An Ecologist's Search for Optimism* (Caitlin Press, 2015), Frid takes the rest of us on their adventures, including those driven by his intellectual inquiry. Where does he lead us? Engaging his solid understanding and experience across a range of ecological and conservation dimensions, Frid allows us to imagine a realistic optimism, a destination we all search for in a world increasingly haunted by ecological darkness.

Anyone who has ever been a parent—or child, for that matter—will delight in the book's structure. Each chapter takes the form of a letter to Twyla Bella, who will no doubt cherish this book when she can understand its depth (likely sooner than later, considering the rich experiences of her childhood). All signed lovingly by “Pops”, the chapters tell the stories of Frid's own life.

The earliest takes place in the forests ascending from the frigid fiords of Chile, 14 years BP (“before parenthood”). Chasing poorly known but highly endangered huemul, Frid works with the spirit and intensity of field biologists of yesteryear. As a sole author, and barely 25, he revealed some of the first detailed scientific understanding of this ungulate's habitat use and social structure (Frid 1994). Twenty-five years later he and Twyla Bella are 12,000 km away, bobbing in the remote seas of coastal British Columbia measuring rockfish age structures in a project designed to ensure food security for local First Nations. Tales like these not only take us to these magical places but also serve as vehicles to weave in content related to fisheries and wildlife science, intergenerational climate justice, Indigenous resurgence, and more.

A chapter I still think about, now months later, is *Vibrant Tension*. I found out that Dr. Seuss evidently earned his doctorate in ecology. Frid explains that this children's author was decades ahead of the contemporary literature on the “ecology of fear.” As he unpacked the storybook's plot, my

delighted mind bounced between the images I remembered as a child from a Dr. Seuss book to new scholarly ones (Frid et al. 2012) painted (and photographed) by Frid. These included father-daughter experiences in Haida Gwaii. There, “Pops” brings the reader to depth as he measures urchins. Living fearlessly without sea otters, these hungry herbivores transform important kelp nurseries for fishes into ecological ghettos.

Although witness to ecological horrors and carrying no small worry for his daughter, Frid steadfastly rejects pessimism. And for me, that is the magic of this book. Frid lives by the same creed of optimism that Michael Soulé, grandfather of conservation science, once described to me as “possibilism”: anything is possible if one commits. Are you scared of the impacts of a disrupted climate on your children? Well, get out there and risk arrest to protest inaction by our policy makers; thoughtfully generate attention, and rally readers of Nature to join you, as Frid did (Frid and Quarmby 2012). Do you believe that fisheries scientists should give pause about how Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their lands, waters and resources that in many cases have been scientifically mis-managed to historic lows? Witness as Frid inspires us with stories of cultural and ecological recovery as he conducts some great science with—and for—coastal First Nations governments along British Columbia's coast (Frid 2016).

I measure the value of a read in how often I think of it. As I envision my own work and life ahead, I find myself returning to this book. I ask, “What would letters I write to my two daughters look like?” I believe readers—ecologists and beyond—will develop a similar relationship to this excellent book.

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