



Dear Son,

Today you celebrate your 20th birthday. Writing that sentence is surreal considering I changed your diaper this morning, and now you're at the park with your mom, probably in that baby swing you love. Before you return and make me read *Good Night, Little Bear* again, I want to write down something important about the future for you to open and read in 2039.

I was inspired by a recent TED Talk featuring entrepreneur Ernesto Sirolli. Wait, do they still have TED Talks in the future? I'm sure entrepreneurs are still around, unless Google has quashed them all. Is there still a Google, though? At any rate, the talk included an anecdote about a group of experts in New York City who convened to discuss the city's future. They determined it would cease to exist in 100 years due to exponential population growth and dirty technology. When was that meeting held? In 1860! The panel decided there would be so much horse manure because of the increasing number of citizens requiring transportation that it would choke the life out of the city.

In 2019, we're still being inundated by expert opinions about the future. Internal-combustion engines are choking New York City, as well as the rest of the world. But it's okay because apparently artificial intelligence will solve the problem. Or nanobots. Or biofacturing. Or space tourism in electric flying saucers! Son, it's all horseshit. No one can predict the future because it's simply impossible to imagine when we are trapped in the thinking of our own time. But it's important to be prepared. And that's why I'm writing this to you.

For advice about how to deal with the challenges that will lie ahead, please do not turn to social media. (God, I hope that has ceased to exist.) In fact, you won't find help with a computer or technology as a whole. What will prepare you for the future's unpredictability are the mountains, forests, rivers, and valleys that we purposely raised you in. They are infinitely old. They have weathered every change. They will teach you the secrets of resiliency and adaptability. Yes, they speak slowly, but their lessons are there. Stand on a summit with arms outstretched and listen carefully. Sit by a stream. Better yet, sit in it. Lie under a tree, even a young one, because it too grew from fragments of its ancients. It's old growth. We're all old growth. And no amount of expert opinion will ever change that.

I hope you have the happiest of birthdays, my son. I cherish every moment with you, the ones we're having now and the ones yet to come.

—Dad (aka Vince Hemsall, managing editor)