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Opening extract from

Mates, Dates & Saving The Planet

Written by

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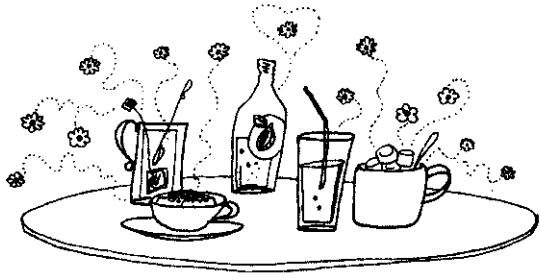


Introduction

A Note from Lucy

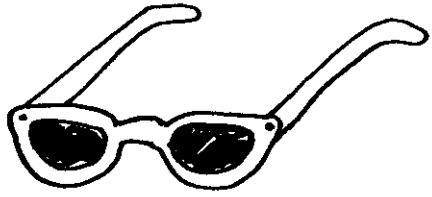
'So what are we going to do to save the planet then?' asked Izzie one Saturday afternoon recently when we (Izzie, TJ, Nesta and me, Lucy) were sitting in Costa's in Highgate.

'What?' said Nesta as she licked chocolate off her spoon then took a sip of her cappuccino.

'We need to do something about global warming,' said Izzie.

'Nah,' said Nesta. 'Bring it on, I say. It means we get fab weather. No more freezing winters. More

chances to wear my bikini, look cool in my shades and get a tan. I'm all for it.'



'But what about the polar bears?' asked TJ.

'What *about* the polar bears?' asked Nesta.

'They will probably be extinct within one hundred years if it carries on.'

'So? We'll be extinct too,' said Nesta. 'Like do you really care what happens in a hundred years? We won't be around.'

'Yes, but our children and grandchildren will be,' said Izzie.

'So let them sort it out,' said Nesta.

'I'm not having children,' I said. 'Way too messy. But I do think we should think about it at least, like, how can we stop global warming?'

'We can't. We're fifteen-year-old schoolgirls,' said Nesta.

'Ah, but remember that quote,' said Izzie. *'If you think you're too small to have any effect, just think what one mosquito can do.'*

'Oh come on, don't let's get heavy,' said Nesta as she clocked a cute boy who'd just walked in. 'It's the weekend. Let's just stick with what we're good at. Being teenagers, checking out boys and then doing a spot of window shopping.'

'That's what *you're* good at,' said Izzie. 'Some of us want to make a difference.'

'Oo-er, get her,' said Nesta.

'I agree with Izzie,' said TJ. 'I think we should do our bit and there must be something we can do. Anything's better than nothing.'

'Bor-ing,' groaned Nesta.

And then Izzie played her master card. 'I was listening to Luke and William talking about it the other night. They're going to see what they can do. William is really into it. I've noticed that a lot of boys seem to take this whole green thing seriously.'

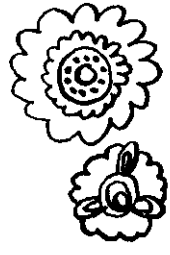
Hah! That got Nesta's attention. William and Luke are major cute boys and William just happens to be Nesta's boyfriend (and Luke is TJ's). Plus

Nesta's always had this complex that she might be a bit shallow and as William is really clever, she worries sometimes that he may dump her.

'OK, *OK*. So what can we do then?' she asked.

And that's what got us started.

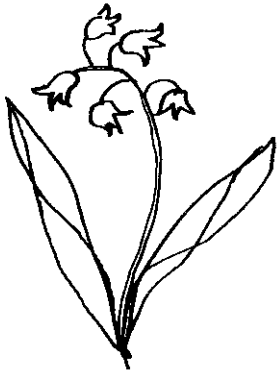
I have to admit we used to be total ignoramuses when it came to the environment and all things green. But then we began to notice that we couldn't turn on the TV or radio or open a magazine without some scientist telling us urgently that climate change is real, it is here, and it's threatening life as we know it. Pretty gloomy doomy news. But there's some good news too and that is scientists also believe that it's not too late for action – so long as we act *now*.



After that afternoon, we all decided to go off and think up as many ways as possible to help and TJ suggested doing this guide to being green. And so,

we're proud to present you with the results right here. You may be worrying that saving the planet means you'll have to start drinking your bath water, let your legs grow hairy and stop using lip gloss. Well, you can if you really want to, but you don't have to. Oh no – we found out that there are all sorts of things you can do that will make a difference to the environment without causing yourself any hardship. Going green doesn't mean that you can never travel in a car again. Or that you should sit at home with all the lights and the heating off – and preferably the TV off too . . . You just need a bit of thought and effort from time to time. One person really *can* make a difference. We (even Nesta) will show you how.

Lots of love
Lucy



PS A note from Nesta while the others aren't listening: *I am sure a lot of you out there are like me. Like, I said I'd go green but I don't want anyone droning on, boring me with the facts. I get it. Planet is in trouble. We're using up our natural resources. We have to act. My attitude is: just tell me what to do. And don't go on about it. Puleese.*

We won't – Izzie, TJ, Lucy.

Oh, you heard. OK. Lalallalala – Nesta.

PPS There's a Glossary at the back of this book which explains eco words you may come across and may not be sure of. We're helpful like that, you know . . .

CHAPTER 1

How Green Are You?

A Note from Izzie

Hi. It's Izzie here.

First of all, a humungous thank you for picking up this book. You are a very good person for this and will get mucho mucho good karma. (For those of you who don't know, karma is not a chicken curry, that's korma; no, karma is like collecting reward points at Sainsbury's – kind of – you get back what you put in sort of thing.) Anyway, you are a good person. All the animals in the world thank you. All the plants in the world thank you. All the

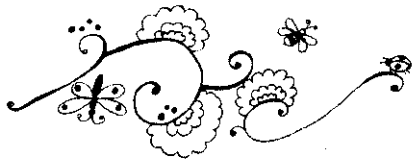
living things in the oceans thank you. All the future generations of the human race thank you. They will build statues to you and worship you. OK, maybe not.

Second of all, we may be just a small band of mates, but together we can rock the world. I mean, look at that popstar Bob Geldof; he phoned up a few of his pals and organised the Live 8 concerts in 2005 – five days afterwards, the leaders of eight of the world's richest countries pledged to double 2004 levels of aid to the poorest nations on Earth. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I think that we can solve the world's problems by tomorrow teatime. But we can definitely help – and have some great times together while we're doing it.

To start with, I've put together a personality quiz about how you live your life and the choices you make every day (maybe without even realising it) about the environment. Answer the questions and keep a tally of your rating (a, b or c for each question), then check the scores ratings at the end. You'll find out whether you're an eco-wombat, an eco-worrier or an eco-superhero.

Love and peace,

Izzie XX



Are you an eco-superhero?

1. How much do you recycle?
   a. Recycle what?
   b. Not much – I'm not sure what to do.
   c. Almost everything! I am known as Ramona the Recycling Queen.

2. What's your most regular mode of transport?
   a. Car.
   b. The bus/train/tube/tram.
   c. Walking or cycling.

3. When you go to the supermarket do you . . .
   a. Use the plastic carrier bags they provide – that's what they're there for.
   b. Bring back your plastic bags from the previous shop because you get money back for using them again.
   c. Bring your own big bag or a cardboard box with you every time.

4. How many protest letters have you ever written about green issues?
   a. None. Are you joking?
   b. I did think about it, but I never got round to it.
   c. One or more.

5. What did you do with your last old mobile phone?
   a. Binned it.
   b. Traded it in at the shop as part of the deal for my new one.
   c. Gave it to a phone recycling scheme.

6. What's your attitude to organic food?
   a. It's expensive.
   b. I eat organic stuff whenever I can.
   c. I grow my own organic veggies – you can really taste the difference.

7. You've finished doing your homework on your computer and you can hear the theme tune to your fave programme starting up in the next room. What do you do?
   a. Get up straight away and go and watch it – leaving the computer on all night.
   b. Get up straight away and go and watch it – then come back afterwards and turn the computer off.
   c. Shut down the computer before you toddle off.

8. How often do you eat red meat?
   a. Every day.
   b. A couple of times a week.
   c. Hardly ever/never.

9. What do you do with used paper?
   a. Chuck it in the bin.
   b. Use it as scrap paper then chuck it in the bin.
   c. Use it as scrap paper then recycle it.

10. Do you use rechargeable batteries?
    a. Never, didn't know there were different kinds.
    b. Sometimes.
    c. Usually/always.

SCORES

Mostly As: You are an eco-wombat.
You think food grows shrink-wrapped on trees. You're totally clueless when it comes to the plight of the planet – you need to shape up, and fast! The future of the globe depends on you and your mates.

Mostly Bs: You are an eco-worrier.
You're concerned about our planet and you'd like to be greener, but you're not always sure what you can do. Never fear, your mates are here – this book will set you on the right path . . .

Mostly Cs: You are an eco-superhero.
You're a shining beacon when it comes to setting an example for green living. If more people were like you, the planet wouldn't need saving. But there is always more to do, so read on for loads of good ideas!

Ask the Expert

Eco-issues can be really confusing. For instance, if the whole planet is covered in water, why do people go on about how we need to save it all the time? Luckily, TJ's older brother Paul has a college friend who's really into all things ecological and has just got a job working for a big green campaigning organisation. So TJ asked if he could meet up with us to explain some things over a cuppa. His name is Tim. He arrived on a bike, was well fit and we are all totally in love. We renamed him Tasty Tim but would just like to point out that he is not the reason we've all converted to being green. . . but he definitely helped.

NB If you're like Nesta and just want to know what to do, skip this section and go straight to Tim's top tips for saving the planet, on page 29.

I'd just like it noted that I did stay and listen to what Timbo had to say and am not as shallow as some people make out – Nesta.

All: Hello, Tim.

Tim: Hello, girls.

TJ: So can you tell us, in a nutshell, why it's so important to go green?

Tim: Sure I can. The most important reason is global warming.

Nesta: *(fluttering her eyelashes enough to cause a mini-hurricane)* Why?

Tim: It causes climate change.

Nesta: *(flutter, flutter)* And why is that?

Tim: The Earth's climate naturally changes over long time periods, swinging from long Ice Ages to shorter, warmer periods. However, recently, scientific data says that the Earth is warming quickly because of human activity, rather than naturally and slowly. The ten hottest years on record have all occurred since the early 1990s –

Nesta: About the time I arrived on the planet *(breaks into song)* Feelin' hot hot hot . . .

TJ: Nesta, shut up.

Nesta: You have to admit that it is a bit of a coincidence.

Izzie: I very much doubt whether your arrival on the planet accounts for global warming – now let Tim tell us about it and stop interrupting.

Nesta: Pff. Only being friendly here, but *do* go on, Tim.

Tim: This means that species have not had time to adapt and nature can no longer cope. The polar ice caps –

Nesta: I can relate to that. *(She starts fanning herself.)* I have a hard time coping too sometimes in the presence of the opposite species.

Lucy: Ignore our friend, Tim. She has a rare illness called flirtoxia. She's taking medication for it but still has outbreaks. It's very sad. Please do go on *(glares at Nesta)*. Some of us are genuinely interested in what you're saying.

Nesta: I'm interested. I am. I *am*.