RRR 3

Notes

Quick facts (from Flanagan)

- Written: 21 Aug 2000 .
- Published: 2001 in Design Is... .
- Son's age: 15 when written; ~16 when published; ~40 now .
- Target future: 2020, where he is 35.

Good or bad?

- Good: cleaner energy, local food resilience, slower consumption ideals.
- Bad: governance "outsourced" to systems, behavioural control disguised as convenience, inequality intensified by access to tech/ infrastructure.

Pertinent dates inside the fictional timeline

2002 — copyright/ownership collapses and is rewritten .
2007 — meat banned after animal disease crises.
2011 — "Great Western Migration" .
2015 — "Northeastern Real Estate Crash" .
2020 — lifestyle governed by new systems: energy, mobility, behaviour, housing.

What became "real" since it was written?

Became real

- Always-on digital life: everyday routines shaped by connected devices, platforms, online marketplaces.
- Wearable/ear tech: headphones, noise control, always-available audio environments .
- Climate anxiety → policy & lifestyle shifts: growing awareness of floods, heat, migration pressure .
- Solar growth & clean-tech rhetoric: transition narratives became mainstream; renewables expanded.

Not real / exaggerated

- Nation-state redesign is speculative fiction logic.
- Strict mileage rationing is not universal reality
- Meat bans didn't happen broadly.

Why it still feels accurate

- It predicts technology becoming infrastructure: not "gadgets," but systems that shape behaviour, economy, and governance.
- It shows how design decisions become political .

Where it fails (or reveals bias)

- Future change is framed as single dramatic events , while real change is usually messy, uneven, platform-led.
- It assumes one coherent "future America," while reality is fragmented by class, region, and access.

Letter to My Son

Dear my child,
By the time you read this, you'll probably be about fifteen. It's 2025 as I write, and you're still very small—but I can't help putting some of "today" into words, like a time capsule for you to open in the future. Not to scare you, and not to predict everything, but to tell you this: the next ten years will move fast, and you can still choose—slowly and clearly—who you want to be.

I imagine you'll grow up in a time when answers are always available. You'll ask a question and a screen will offer a hundred explanations at once. When you write, draw, or study, AI may feel as normal as air—always there, always ready. It will be useful, and it will be tempting: it may convince you that speed equals intelligence, and that "output" matters more than feeling. But I hope you remember this—what truly belongs to you is rarely found in the quickest second. It lives in the moment you pause, doubt, and think again. Please don't outsource your judgment to any system. Tools can help you move, but they cannot choose your direction.

You may understand climate more deeply than I did at your age, because it will become part of daily life rather than just the news. You might live through hotter summers, more unstable weather, and more frequent reminders: save water, save energy, waste less. You'll hear people argue about responsibility—toward ourselves, toward the city, toward strangers, toward the future, even toward lives that cannot speak. I hope you stay kind without being naïve. You don't have to be perfect, but don't become indifferent. You can be small and still be responsible. The world rarely changes because one person does something dramatic—it changes because many people make slightly different choices every day.

You'll also live in a time when "real" is harder to recognise. A photo may not be a photo; a voice may not be a voice. So much can be generated, edited, and stitched together. There may be moments when you feel exhausted, unsure what to trust. When that happens, treat truth as a practice, not a button. Check sources, ask "who benefits," and give yourself time. You don't have to win every argument, but you do need to protect your attention—because attention will become the most expensive resource, and people will compete for it using algorithms, emotion, fear, and excitement.

I want to tell you something softer too: you don't have to be online all the time. You can disappear for a while—go for a walk, stare out of a window, listen to the wind, talk face to face with someone you trust. You'll find that many things you truly want to say feel too light inside a text box, and many hugs you truly need cannot be replaced by a "message sent." Please leave space for moments that aren't recorded—no photos, no posts, no explanations—just being.

About "success," I hope you can stay free. By 2035 the world may value efficiency, skills, and competition even more, but what I hope you have is a steady inner core: you know what you care about, you're willing to work for it over time, and you allow yourself to pause sometimes. You can be good at learning and good at playing; rational and romantic. Don't let any single standard trap you. You are not a project to be graded—you are a person who will grow, change, and make mistakes.

If I could give you a simple survival guide, it would be four sentences:

1. *Don't hand your judgment over to a system.*
2. *Don't sell your attention to fear or addiction.*
3. *Keep empathy for people and for the world.*
4. *Believe you can help shape the future.*

Because the future isn't only predicted—it's designed: by policies, by platforms, by cities, and also by the everyday choices of ordinary people. You will make choices within it, and you will become part of what those choices create. I hope that when you read this in 2035, you can say: I live with clarity, I remain gentle, and I didn't let the world push me along without thinking.

And finally, I want you to know: whatever the world becomes, I will always want you to be happy—not the kind of happiness driven by constant stimulation, but the kind that comes from safety, from being understood, from knowing "I'm becoming myself."
With love,

Your mom