

sphere on a chalkboard and told the actor, "You want to be involved in environmental issues? This is the most important thing facing all of humanity and the future."

At first, it was just appearances at Earth Day events and the occasional conference, and then there was the narration of his climate-change film *The 11th Hour* in 2007. But in the past decade, it has gone from passion to obsession. "I am consumed by this," says DiCaprio. "There isn't a couple of hours a day where I'm not thinking about it. It's this slow burn. It's not 'aliens invading our planet next week and we have to get up and fight to defend our country,' but it's this inevitable thing, and it's so terrifying."

A couple of years ago, DiCaprio met with a casual friend, the actor Fisher Stevens, once known as Michelle Pfeiffer's ex and the ethnically dubious star of *Short Circuit 2*, but now an accomplished documentary producer. The two had become reacquainted while filming the disappearing reefs in the Galapagos, an event made memorable for DiCaprio's scuba tank malfunctioning while shooting footage and DiCaprio desperately looking for someone to help him to the top. He (of course) found Ed Norton, who shared air with DiCaprio as they slowly ascended to avoid the bends.

Stevens and DiCaprio talked of shooting a climate-change film that would feature DiCaprio as a man on a global pursuit for the truth. The film would be equal parts gonzo, absurd and scare-the-shit-out-of-you testimonials from scientists and leaders. (There's a Joaquin Phoenix quality to some of it, with DiCaprio, in full *Revenant* shagginess, interviewing a pristine Bill Clinton with the New York skyline behind him.)

Just as preproduction was starting for the doc, funding came through for *The Revenant*. Rather than pass on either project, DiCaprio chose to see a symmetry between the two, with Hugh Glass representing a man on the front end of the West's destruction of the land and the extermination of other cultures, and DiCaprio's documentary set two centuries later as the world faces the bill for all the raping and pillaging. The links grew stronger as DiCaprio visited the hellish Alberta, Canada, tar-sand oil fields, several hours north of the breathless mountains and streams of the *Revenant* set. Meanwhile, filming was repeatedly hampered by a lack of snow as Alberta "enjoyed" the warmest winter on record. The connections left Inárritu and DiCaprio shaking their heads as they suffered through multiple delays.

"It was a parallel universe," remembers Inárritu. "We discussed it at length. It was scary to be depicting how it all started in this country, and now we're suffering 200 years of consequences for that. It was a mirror. It was funny and scary as hell."

"We went out there with the purpose of discovering something and seeing what nature was saying," says DiCaprio about the shoot. He flexes his hands open and shut in frustration. "That was never directly articulated, but it was like, 'OK, what happens if we put ourselves in the elements? What are we gonna discover?' The thing that I was left with was this crazy, insane message of nature fighting back and essentially stopping production." Later, he put it more bluntly. "The big question is, is it all too late?"

As the documentary crew travels from global bleak spot to bleak spot, Stevens has occasionally had to remind DiCaprio not to wallow too much in hopelessness. "I'm more the light and he's the dark," says Stevens with a grin. "I'm always say-

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ing, 'Don't be so fucking pessimistic, man. If we make a movie where it's already too late, what are we making the movie for?'" Stevens smiles hopefully. "Leo gets that." We'll see. DiCaprio has final cut.

IT'S THE SUNDAY AFTER THANKS-GIVING, and Miami Beach is in a sleepy interlude between turkey and the hordes arriving later in the week for Art Basel, which is Sundance for the art crowd. Stevens and his crew are setting up in the city hall offices of Mayor Philip Levine to ask him about how rising waters are threatening the city (a line of questioning partially inspired by a 2013 *ROLLING STONE* article by Jeff Goodell). DiCaprio arrives looking tired in a short-sleeved polka-dot blue shirt and droopy jeans exposing powder-blue boxers. He stretches theatrically.

"I think I got too much sleep last night," Stevens laughs. "That would be a first." DiCaprio is two-tracking obligations as details of *The Revenant* have started seeping out and his camp has had to tamp down rumors that he was sexually as-

saulted by a grizzly in one of the film's gory passages ("That's not what's happening"). Then a veteran movie blogger said that he loved the film but there was no way women were going to sit through the gorefest. "I think it's silly, and I think that the women I've spoken to really enjoyed the movie," says DiCaprio.

But after a quick hairbrush session, DiCaprio shifts into environmental-warrior mode. Stevens gives him a list of questions, but he largely wings it. First, DiCaprio and Levine talk of mutual friends, including billionaire Russian construction magnate Vladislav Doronin.

"Our good mutual friend Vlad says hello," says Levine, before telling a story about Doronin offering to take him out for an ocean swim and Levine joking about his fear of not returning.

"Vlad is a lot of fun," admits DiCaprio, adding how much he enjoys Doronin's Aman Resorts, discrete seven-star accommodations scattered across the globe.

Then they begin to talk. DiCaprio asks Levine if he's worried about declining real-estate prices.

"I'm not going to preside over Miami Beach becoming Venice," says Levine. "I think property levels are just going to continue to rise."

DiCaprio doesn't agree, saying he'd already unloaded his beach house: "I wouldn't take that bet."

Levine wants to show DiCaprio some of the work the glitzy resort town is doing to lessen the impact of rising tides, so we pile into the Tesla while the mayor travels in a black SUV. DiCaprio understands no mayor is going to come out in public and say, "Sell your condo, we're screwed," but he doesn't share his optimism. "You know what they're doing now?" DiCaprio asks. "They're building high-rises where the lobby can flood and the rest of the building can just continue on. But he's right, prices are still going up. It's unbelievable."

We stop at a section of streets that the city has raised four feet to provide a bulwark against the sea. The two do a walk-and-talk while Sunday brunchers begin to gawk and stalk at a careful distance.

We eventually reach the water, and it's horrifying in an affluent kind of way. The water level has risen to nearly equal with boat docks, rendering ladders leading into the ocean irrelevant. DiCaprio and Levine walk out on a tenuous sea wall and look across the bay to where, coincidentally, their friend Vlad's yacht glitters in the morning light. The mayor admits that the city needs \$400 million to build new sea walls and a system of pumps and to raise roads. And that number doesn't even include sand from the Bahamas.

DiCaprio nearly does a spit take. "The Bahamas?"

The mayor nods and says Bahamas sand can be cheaper than American sand.