

## Synopsis: Future Imperfect

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Genre: contemporary, speculative fiction.

Themes: intergenerational relationships; personal development; climate change; entrepreneurial forces; indigenous cultures.

Word count 79,000

In 2050, climate change and the resulting xenophobia have caused mass migration. To evade the border police who patrol major roads and public transport, a displaced family in search of refuge walks through Europe following an ancient pilgrimage route, now one of the few safe corridors for migrants travelling north from the devastated south.

### Synopsis

In 2050, when the River Rhône floods Arles, France, **Helen**, 59, a retired psychiatrist, and **Isha**, 60, a retired architect, are forced to leave their retirement home. They plan to join their adopted French-Senegalese daughter **Jana** and eleven-month-old granddaughter, **Ayo**. But when they arrive at the port of Calais, immigration agents inform Isha that her British citizenship is no longer valid because her grandparents are Ugandan-Asian. She is barred from crossing the channel. Faced with a terrible dilemma, Helen chooses to remain with her wife.

Homeless and now also stateless, Helen and Isha decide to take refuge in a friend's mountain chalet in Switzerland, but to avoid immigration checks on major roads and public transport, they must walk along the Via Francigena, an ancient pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome, and now the preferred escape corridor for refugees fleeing climate catastrophes.

Horried by the thought of her parents embarking on such a dangerous journey, Jana resolves to follow them. Unprepared and unused to walking, she and baby Ayo find themselves in places where the Nband technology she has relied on since childhood is only partially functional. She can still use Xiris, her digital assistant, but soon realises that to avoid the immigration agents, she'll have to free herself of her dependence on technology.

Helen and Isha, Jana and Ayo communicate whenever and however they can. Each pair faces the extremes of exhaustion, terror, pity, and virulent xenophobia rooted in protecting scarce resources. They meet those who foster community living in the changing world and those who take advantage of the refugees' predicament to further their own agendas. Helen and Isha meet people living in ancient tunnels under the town of Arras, wealthy people residing in climate-controlled domes, members of a resistance group called Femto, and a boy silenced by grief who is working towards a revolution in society and farming. They also discover the diary of a French woman, which opens their eyes to lessons to be learned from the lives of trees. Meanwhile, Jana, who has to live without an internet connection

for the first time in her life, must keep her daughter safe, realign her understanding of how societies should work, and resist her attraction to a man she meets.

After months of travelling, the women are reunited at the mountain chalet. Jana, who has been collating their communications and recording their progress, now asks Helen and Isha to make their own recordings for a joint account of their story. However, living in close quarters after so many years apart causes difficulties, and each of them looks for an alternative option, though it comes sooner than expected.

They are forced to flee again when a neighbour reports their presence, but this time they escape with the help of guides and despite the harsh realities, they rediscover each other. Their journey ends unexpectedly in Parma, Italy, which is a perfect destination for reasons they could never have imagined.

The book ends on a note of sadness when Helen passes away, but also with the hope that the effects of climate change can be adapted to and moderated by humans who are willing to work together.

*Future Imperfect* is not a dystopian novel. Its key themes are climate change, personal development, and the lessons to be learned from indigenous cultures.