

# Future Imperfect, a Jeremiad

*by Gary Hardaway*

Before I die, in 2026, I will see  
the collapse of the twenty-first century  
and the birth of a long, dark age

where the wealthy will be eaten by the poor  
and the poor will be eaten by disease  
and the inevitable factions and fissures

natural among the humans will shrink  
the living further and further.  
I will witness only the first few failings-

the power grid, the information grid,  
the networks of water, the networks of government,  
the networks of justice, law, and trash collection.

After that, our numbers will fall  
from 7 billion, to 5 billion, to two billion,  
to maybe 200 million. Within fifty years

of 2016, New York will be abandoned,  
London a smelly swamp decorated by ruins,  
Paris a black market meeting place,

Miami a memory, and Moscow  
a ghost town, deadly with radiation.  
We might survive, an ignorant, widespread

trace of nomads, incapable of calculus,

incapable of flight. At that point,  
the signals from afar that we awaited

and searched for among the stars  
for decades, will arrive, unheard,  
unwitnessed, among the feeble, illiterate tribes.

