

A POSSIBLE FUTURE

IT NEVER HAD TO BE THIS WAY

A future we can still change



Imagine a future in which the barriers remain. What follows is a warning, not a forecast.



Appointments existed. Reaching one, waiting for one, affording the journey: another struggle.



Rent rose. Care, food and warmth slipped out of reach.



Rent. Interest. Fees. An ordinary wage left less room for an ordinary life.



Some owners lived nearby. Some never visited. Decisions travelled farther than responsibility.



Who collects the return? Who pays when things break?



One day, this will be yours.

I need a life before then.



Age did not decide who cared. Some people opened their doors. Others protected the price of every key.



The shared room shut. People met less. Rumour filled the space.



He asked for space to live and grow. The owner preferred to wait for a higher price.



I can trial new methods. I need training, finance and a fair buyer.



Aquaponics. Perennials. Healthy soil. Useful trials struggled for support while speculation still paid.



Leaders announced bargains. People living under attack waited for peace.



Arms orders grew. Fuel still moved. Income could rise while families lost everything.



Governments changed. Contracts renewed. The war outlived the promises.



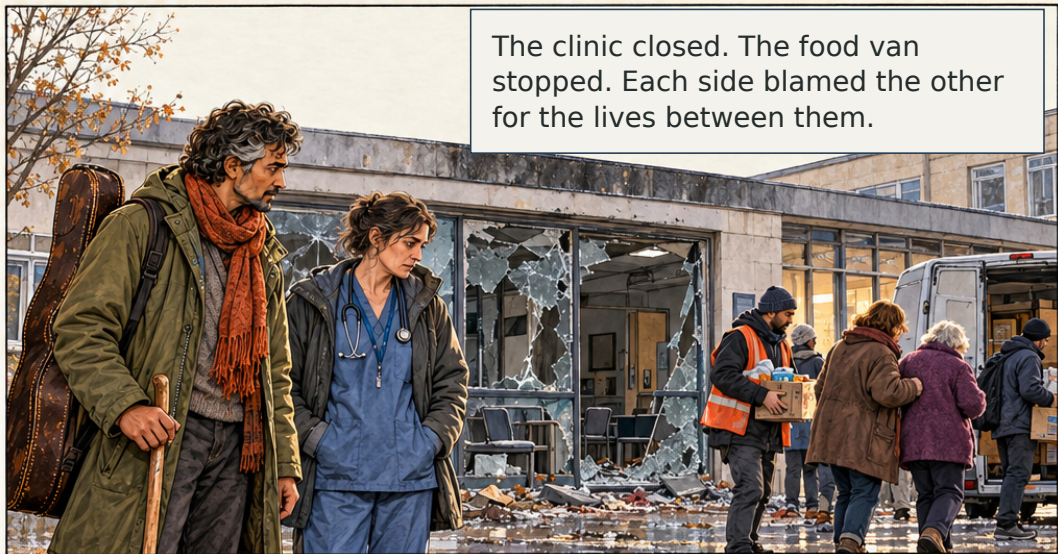
Each faction promised protection in exchange for obedience. Fear made an enemy easier to see than a neighbour.



In this dark branch, intimidation became organised armed conflict. This escalation was a choice, not a destiny.



The clinic closed. The food van stopped. Each side blamed the other for the lives between them.



Some sought independent Scotland or Wales in Europe. Others argued for Irish unity. These futures required consent and decisions.



People had crossed these seas for centuries. No ancestry made today's neighbours worth less.



Whichever constitution people chose, homes, care and opportunity still had to be built.



The world kept warming. Heat, flood and drought reached people with the least protection.



Damage ate into budgets. Repairs, insurance and food cost more. Spare money bought time.



Scientists warned of a weaker Atlantic overturning circulation (AMOC). Sharper change was a serious risk.



This imagined future includes a severe AMOC disruption over decades, reaching a society already divided.



Elsewhere, heat and disrupted rains continued. Regional cold did not freeze the whole planet.



Cold became deadly where warm homes, reliable power and care had already failed.



Years later, the house still held its wealth. The town that sustained it had emptied.



I can pay. Why is nobody coming?



Money could not become a nurse, a repair crew, clean water or a harvest.



There had been people here. Hands. Skills. Families. Time.
More value than the accounts had ever counted.



The imagined ending stops here. Our choices are still open.



A home. Care. A share. A place to disagree and still belong.



Research and reporting checked to 16 October 2026. The story combines documented pressures with a deliberately severe fictional branch. It does not estimate the probability of that whole chain, establish secret motives, or predict the disappearance of humanity.

Wealth, ownership and access

ONS estimates for Great Britain in April 2020-March 2022 put the wealth of the richest 1% of households equal to that of the least wealthy 50% combined. This is a concentration measure, not evidence that inequality rises every year; pandemic survey and pension-method changes limit comparisons. [1]

Overseas beneficiaries held 58.8% of the market value of UK quoted shares in 2024. That is not a share of all UK land, GDP or money. Investment can build capacity; ownership data alone establish neither extraction nor wrongdoing. The story asks who benefits, who contributes and who answers for the costs. [2]

Care can exist and remain hard to reach

The October 2026 Commons briefing reports a waiting list below its 2023 peak, but persistent failure of the 18-week target. Doctor and nurse numbers rose over the five years to July 2026; counts do not adjust for demand. DHSC documents real medicine shortages and systems to manage them. Current evidence supports access problems, not a claim that doctors and medicines have vanished. [3, 4]

War: events, interests and interpretation

Reuters reported renewed strikes and the breakdown of an announced energy truce on 15 October. SIPRI records USD 679 billion in Top 100 arms revenues in 2024: revenue is not profit or proof of a plan for endless war. Le Monde analysed the fuel deal as advantageous to Russia. The White House's 5 October diesel policy stressed affordability; senators opposed the Russian deal on 13 October. These are reported events, analysis and competing official positions. A shared scheme to prolong war for personal profit is not established here. [5-9]

[1] ONS: household wealth, April 2020 to March 2022

[2] ONS: ownership of UK quoted shares, 2024

[3] Commons Library: NHS key statistics, 2 October 2026

[4] DHSC: medicine supply management, 2026

[5] Reuters: energy truce breaks down, 15 October 2026

[6] SIPRI: Top 100 arms revenues, 2024 (released 2025)

[7] Le Monde: fuel-deal analysis, 12-13 October 2026

[8] White House: diesel-affordability policy, 5 October 2026

[9] US senators: letter opposing diesel deal, 13 October 2026

Land ownership is not the same as usable income

England's 2024/25 farm accounts show wide differences between farm types and income sources. Many farms already diversify: 72% had diversified activity and 27% generated solar energy. Land, debt, tenancy, unpaid family work and cash flow need separate examination. A field can be food production, habitat or flood storage. Neither acreage nor a quiet-looking field proves greed or uselessness. [10]

The land investor, the hesitant owner and the farmer seeking support are fictional composites. Their different choices matter. No finding about a named farm, family or business is made.

Aquaponics and perennials are real tools

FAO's technical manual sets out integrated fish-and-plant production, system design, biological management and costs. Aquaponics needs expertise, reliable power, feed and water management; suitable yields do not remove those inputs. It can complement farming, rather than demonstrate that all fields, staple crops or tractors are redundant. [11]

A perennial-rice field study found eight harvests from one planting over four years, with yields comparable to replanted annual rice and benefits to soil and labour inputs. It also identified adoption risks. This is evidence for innovation under the conditions tested, not proof that the same crop, yield or economics transfers to every UK site. Other perennial crops need their own local trials. [12]

The climate baseline is still global warming

UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2025 found that global greenhouse-gas emissions continued rising in 2024. It estimated about 2.8 °C of warming this century under the policies it assessed, compared with 2.3-2.5 °C if stated national commitments were fully implemented. Those are conditional global projections above pre-industrial levels, not a single local weather forecast or an unchangeable destiny. [13]

The plot shows how housing, health, food, energy and climate shocks could compound. That interaction is the story's organising hypothesis; no cited study validates every link or proves that one settlement size would prevent the ending.

[10] Defra: farm accounts, England, 2024/25

[11] FAO: Small-scale aquaponic food production, 2014

[12] Nature Sustainability: perennial rice field trials, 2022/23

[13] UNEP: Emissions Gap Report 2025

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation transports heat through the ocean. It is a circulation system, not a switch that freezes the whole planet. Weakening, loss of northern deep-water formation and a complete overturning collapse are related questions that require clear definitions.

Read the assumptions behind the headlines

The IPCC's 2021 assessment expected AMOC weakening this century and expressed medium confidence that an abrupt collapse would not occur before 2100. That is a dated assessment with stated uncertainty, not a guarantee. [14]

A 2025 Nature study, also presented in an author-written EGU abstract, found persistent overturning in its model experiments under extreme forcing, identifying a stabilising role for Southern Ocean upwelling. It concluded that collapse this century was unlikely within that analysis. [15]

A 2026 Science Advances study used observations to constrain model projections and estimated roughly 50% weakening by the end of the century. This raises concern about stronger change; it does not report an observed 50% fall today or establish a certain collapse date. The two studies use different questions and assumptions. Their headlines cannot be treated as a simple vote for safety or doom. [16]

A stress scenario describes consequences if it happens

The Met Office's high-impact, low-likelihood work includes conditional AMOC-collapse experiments with substantial UK cooling, changed rainfall and other impacts relative to a world without that collapse. The report's assumed start and peak dates are scenario inputs. They are not forecast dates. Climate effects differ by region; wider global warming and other hazards continue. [17]

The comic chooses severe disruption as a fictional stress test over decades. It assigns no probability to that branch. It does not claim that AMOC collapse is inevitable, that Britain instantly becomes an ice sheet, or that humanity is scientifically expected to freeze to extinction. Serious uncertainty supports preparation, emissions cuts and resilient services; it does not require fatalism.

[14] IPCC AR6: Working Group I, Summary for Policymakers, 2021

[15] Nature 2025: continued overturning (author abstract at EGU)

[16] Science Advances 2026: observational constraints on AMOC

[17] Met Office: high-impact, low-likelihood background report

Published [15]: Nature, DOI 10.1038/s41586-024-08544-0

Published [16]: Science Advances, DOI 10.1126/sciadv.adx4298

A shared political space

OECD's 2026 survey links perceived political voice with trust. This is not a civil-war forecast. MI5's October 2026 threat assessment documents serious extremist risks, including a rising extreme-right threat. It does not predict symmetrical left-right armies or inevitable UK civil war. Those factions and their escalation are fictional. [18, 19]

Constitutional futures require choices and law

An independent Scotland or Wales could seek EU membership through accession rules and agreement; membership is not automatic. Irish unity has a distinct consent-based route under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The European Council recognised that a lawfully united Ireland would be in the EU. There is no procedure called the Celtic nations ejecting England. An eligible future English state could also seek EU membership. [20-22]

History is migration, not inherited guilt

A 2022 ancient-DNA study combined 460 genomes with archaeology and 57 new radiocarbon dates, finding substantial North Sea migration and later mixture. Anglo-Saxon settlement involved several kingdoms, not one simple arrival in Mercia. Ancestry neither ranks present-day rights nor makes descendants guilty. The story rejects exclusion, whichever nationality it targets. [23, 24]

[18] OECD: Trust Survey 2026 results

[19] MI5: annual threat update, October 2026

[20] European Commission: steps towards joining the EU

[21] Belfast / Good Friday Agreement: agreed text, 1998

[22] House of Lords: Irish unity and EU membership, 2017

[23] Nature 2022: ancient DNA and Anglo-Saxon migration

[24] English Heritage: Anglo-Saxons and several kingdoms

The empty town and isolated owner are invented consequences in one dark branch. Other people leave, rebuild, cooperate and choose differently. **A Place to Begin** explores an alternative direction; its 50,000-person capacity is a design proposal, not a proven cure.

Concept: The Green Tank. Fictional cast and likenesses; no real private person is identified. AI-assisted adaptation and lettering; AI-generated illustrations. Cautionary edition, 16 October 2026. This is a companion to *Before the Silence*, *A Moment of Quiet* and *A Place to Begin*.