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### **Future Home of the Living God**

By Louise Erdrich  
Harper  
288 pp.

Louise Erdrich, at this point, can safely be regarded as one of our finest living American writers. With award winning novels such as *The Round House* and *The Plague of Doves*, Erdrich has explored the lives of Native Americans in the U.S. and dealt with issues such as family, identity, and the meaning of justice. In her newest release, *Future Home of the Living God*, she places these explorations in the ever growing and changing genre of speculative fiction, and does so masterfully.

The novel follows a young Ojibwe woman named Cedar Hawk Songmaker, who was adopted by a white Minnesota family at the time of her birth. American society begins to quickly crumble around her as the scientific community discovers that evolution has begun to reverse itself. Erdrich seems to intentionally leave this concept vague, as there is no explanation as to why it is happening. Some of the examples that we see throughout the action of the novel are women giving birth to apparently primitive species of humans and prehistoric forms of animals and plants. And, early on, it is discovered that Cedar is pregnant, which sends her on a quest to both survive her present and discover her past.

Much like the reverse in evolution that spurs the chaos of the novel, Cedar witnesses society around her devolve into something more primal. Pregnant women are arrested and ripped away from their families and friends to be 'hospitalized' by shadowy groups that may or may not be associated with a largely dysfunctional government.

One of the most poignant sections of the book deals with Cedar suffering such a fate. She and her fellow inmates experience constant abuse, which culminates in her harrowing escape reminiscent of the Underground Railroad. Throughout the novel, Cedar must deal with an atmosphere of mistrust. The father of her child is tortured into turning her in, and futuristic listening devices are used to track the few remaining pregnant women who retain their freedom.

Despite the overarching theme of dystopia, Erdrich also creates a touching story of a young woman attempting to find herself in a crumbling world while coming to grips with a complicated definition of family. Cedar eventually reunites with her biological mother, Mary Potts, on the Ojibwe reservation where she lives. This location is revisited throughout the novel, and ultimately comes to represent Cedar's struggles with identity. As she interacts with both her birth and adopted families, she finds herself on unsure ground regarding where she belongs. Cedar must juggle new relationships with old as people move in and out of her life at a dizzying pace.

Ultimately, what Erdrich creates through Cedar's journey is a story of faith. Despite all the chaotic events around her, Cedar continues to write for her Catholic magazine and returns to her beliefs again and again during her struggles. There is also a sense of faith in humanity that overshadows the horrors that people pervade on each other consistently in the novel. Cedar, as she fights for herself, her

family, and her unborn child, provides us with a sense of hope, a light in a world descending into darkness.