

LAUREN JAMES



*In a climate
catastrophe...*

*...resistance is
taking root*

GREEN RISING

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GREEN RISING

LAUREN JAMES

WALKER
BOOKS

*For everyone who is angry, and everyone
who is scared. Hope isn't lost.*

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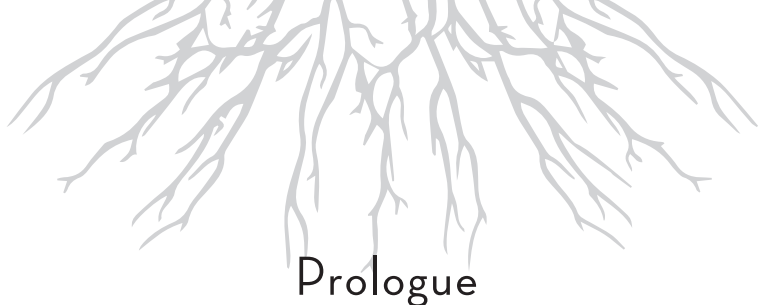
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I incite this meeting to rebellion.

Emmeline Pankhurst



Prologue

There weren't many of them at first. Just a few students standing outside the conference centre. Gabrielle lingered on the outskirts, trying not to give off the aura of someone skipping school. A girl in a pageant ribbon embossed with **THERE IS NO PLANET B** was painting green and blue splodges on people's cheeks.

The protest had seemed like a good idea when Gabrielle had read about it online. A climate forum thread had suggested people protest the annual Fuel Summit taking place inside the exhibition hall.

The people who were contributing most to climate change were there, as the biggest energy companies in the world made deals to drill for more oil and open more power plants. But the crowd was just lingering around the car park, so none of the executives inside could even see them. It seemed such a waste, after coming all this way.

Gabrielle had to do something. She slipped away as a boy shouted into a megaphone, "Hello, Climate Rebellion! Let me hear you repeat after me: *Climate change is not a lie, do*

not let our planet die!" He'd draped a sheet over his shoulders like a cape, hand-painted with the words SAVE OUR FUTURE in messy strokes.

Heading around the rear of the building, Gabrielle hid her cardboard sign behind an overflowing waste bin. She tucked her school tie into her pocket, so that her uniform looked vaguely like a business suit.

She lingered around the staff entrance, pretending to send a text. Faint shouts of, *"No more coal, no more oil! Keep our carbon in the soil!"* drifted over from the car park.

When a harried-looking employee unlocked the door with their key card, she slipped in after them. Head down, she moved along the corridor, adrenaline surging up her spine. As soon as she was alone in the network of corridors, she smashed a fire alarm with her elbow.

A piercing alarm echoed down the empty hall. She followed the stream of staff out of the conference centre, where they joined up with the river of conference attendees.

Hiding a grin, Gabrielle retrieved her sign from behind the bins and joined the group of protestors.

"This world is not for sale, your pipeline plans will fail!" she chanted at the annoyed crowd of evacuated oil executives.

Even though this protest was only small, they had to make their voices heard whenever they could. The climate emergency was huge – an impossible crisis almost beyond solving. But if enough people, in enough cities, in enough

countries, spoke up, then maybe someone would listen. Their voices were all they had right now. Most of the students here were too young to vote or make any real political difference.

"We will choose, we will decide, we will fight to turn the tide!" she shouted, adjusting her grip on her sign. Pins and needles tickled her fingertips.

Gabrielle had been six when she'd found out that the carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels were raising global temperatures. She'd assumed that the grown-ups were dealing with it, back then. But even when wildfires burned up entire continents and hurricanes tore up coastlines, no one seemed to be doing *anything*. Her planet needed Gabrielle's voice, because even though it was crying out for help, nobody was listening.

"There is no Planet A," she mumbled, too late to correct herself. Her fingers were really aching from holding up the sign now. She kept losing track of the words. It was supposed to be "Planet B".

She swapped the hand holding the banner, rubbing her palm flat against her trousers. There was a throbbing pain as blood rushed back into her lowered arm. Her fingernails were pulsing, fire-hot blood beating below the skin in time with her racing heart.

"Stop denying that the Earth is dying."

There was something underneath her nail. Something green, twisting like it was trying to get free. Her fingernail felt like it was going to come loose.

The chant changed to, “*Say it loud, say it clear, polar bears are dying here!*” as the green thing – insect? parasite? – writhed beneath her nail. It curled upwards, like it was searching for the light.

Gabrielle’s panic was replaced by fascination as the tendril thickened into a flat surface. A leaf.

“When the air we breathe is under attack, what do we do? FIGHT BACK! What do we do? FIGHT BACK!”

The stem moved faster, growing more leaves over her palm. Another strand burst from her thumbnail, and another, until vines covered her arm in a green, seething mass of vegetation.

It didn’t hurt, not physically. She should be terrified, but somehow it felt – good, like a release of pent-up tension. The vines grew stronger, stems thickening and sprouting strong, glossy leaves. They engulfed her banner, reaching up towards the sky.

There were exclamations of alarm as the vines wove through her hair. Someone started filming her, as if the plant was some kind of art piece that Gabrielle had created especially for the protest.

This was true and right and inevitable. This was what her hands were meant for. How had she not noticed that she could do this before? She was absolutely certain this was a good thing, not a danger at all. A gift.

The other protestors circled her, shouting questions she couldn’t answer. Even the fuel executives drifted closer to stare at her.

Gabrielle swayed in the centre of the pulsating layer of green leaves, peacefully lost in a glowing haze of endorphins. Her sign remained valiantly upright under the weight of the plants. Its carefully painted message was still visible: IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE. WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET — AND YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET.

She was calm. She was ready. The temperature was rising, but so were they.



Chapter 1

Theo was lugging a crate of iced haddock across the boat's deck when a deafening alarm cut through the wind. He stumbled, fish flying everywhere as he sprinted towards the bridge.

This was exactly why he hated helping his dad out on the weekends. Not the crashing waves, rocking boat or getting up at sparrow's fart in the morning, but the constant threat of the ocean.

Theo swallowed back dizziness as the deck rolled beneath him. He fixed his gaze on the oil rig looming on the horizon, its metal crane crouched over the water like an unnatural, ghastly insect.

Theo's family had been fishing for generations – his dad, his grandad, and *his* dad, all the way back as far as they knew – but there wasn't much money in it these days. Good hauls were rare everywhere now, but since Dalex Energy had arrived, it had got much worse.

The energy company had built a new oil drilling rig right in the middle of the North Sea where Theo's dad normally

fished. The hulking orange platform dumped bilge water into the ocean as they processed oil, covering the seabed in chemicals and dirty sediment. The shoals were moving to different waters.

“What’s going on?” Theo yelled at Dad, just as the deck shook with a dull scraping sound. He fell to his knees, chin banging on the sharp edge of the desk.

A second alarm was sounding now, harsh and discordant on top of the first. Theo’s heart tripped over itself. This wasn’t a minor issue. This was real.

Scanning readouts, Dad said, “We’ve hit something! Bloody Dalex must not have marked a wellhead platform.”

Theo wiped slick blood from his mouth as the boat shook around them. Dalex were supposed to put buoy markers in the water and send the coastguards the coordinates of their underwater structures. If they’d missed one, the boat’s early warning radar would have only picked up on the structure seconds before the collision.

On the screen, a bright-red warning was flashing: BILGE FLOOD DETECTED.

“We’re taking on water!” Dad yelled. “Lifejackets, everyone! Get the pumps!”

The deckhands rushed into action. They uncoiled the tubes of the bilge pumps, trying to slow the flood of water pouring into the boat through the damaged hull.

As Dad steered the boat away from the underwater structure, Theo’s emergency training finally kicked into

action. He radioed the coastguard and gave their coordinates over the roar of the pumps' engines.

"Good lad," Dad called, turning on the emergency radio beacon. "Inflate the life raft? It's going to be close."

Theo nodded. A calmness had washed over him. This was unreal. He'd been having nightmares about Dad's boat sinking since he was a child. But he hadn't imagined being on board when it happened.

The floodwater was pouring over the concrete ballast lining the fish hold now. Their pumps weren't going to be enough.

Two deckhands were already using the power block to lift the life raft down from the wheelhouse roof to the poop deck. Theo helped them to inflate it, his eyes going blurry. How could he be *sweating*? It was freezing out here.

Most of the time, Theo felt like the useless skipper's son who mistook plaice for haddock, only worked on the weekends and couldn't handle the early starts. But Dad didn't have to pay another deckhand when Theo helped out. That was something, at least.

"Time to leave," Dad said grimly as the boat tilted steeply, heeling in the swell. "It's no good."

Theo desperately wanted to call his mum. But even if he could get a signal, what good would it do to tell her what was happening now? They were too far away. She would just panic.

Instead he helped Dad climb onto the raft. The boat was almost too small for all the men in their bulky lifejackets.

Dad perched on the edge, holding tight to the roping as they untethered the raft from the sinking ship.

Theo tried to make himself smaller, feeling young and useless and lost as the men guided the raft away from the boat. They were ten metres away when it finally sank below the waves.

“We didn’t lose anyone, lads,” Dad said, a resigned note in his voice. “That’s all that matters. And this is what insurance is for.”

Theo could hear the tremble hidden inside those words. He shivered, wriggling on the narrow wooden bench. The wind was scorching cold.

He glared at the looming Dalex rig. Why couldn’t they mark their structures properly? They were already destroying the sea, and now they’d taken Dad’s boat too.

The coastguards radioed with an update, saying they were fifteen minutes away. The crew sat in silence, teeth chattering audibly, until one of the deckhands turned the radio on.

“Are you hoping they’ll mention us, Reg? The coastguards aren’t even here yet.”

“Eh, you never know.”

Theo could barely focus on the words through his white-hot panic. Dad tapped Theo’s boot with his toes reassuringly.

On the radio, the news presenter was saying, “*Warren Space unveiled their latest plans for Mars in a conference this morning. The company is opening up advance orders for*

purchase of real estate in the settlement, though residencies won't be built for several more decades."

The red light of the sunken boat flickered into darkness below the water. What did this all mean for Dad? They barely had enough money to pay the bills normally. Even if the insurance covered the cost of the boat, they'd still lost a day's haul.

Theo was probably too young to be worried about mortgages, but he thought about bills constantly. If his parents could only hold on for another year, then Theo could lend them his student loan payment when he went to uni. He'd been planning it for ages. But this was too soon. He couldn't help them yet.

The deckhands were chatting about the news now, voices forcefully bright and cheerful. "Would you go, though? Just give up your whole life on Earth?"

Theo tried to think of a pun about Mars as Dad said, "As if any of us would ever get the chance to go there! It'll be pure billionaires for the first hundred-odd years."

"They'll need manual workers, though, Jeff. Someone's got to build all these fancy new houses in the colony."

"Yeah, the maths lads won't be faffing about digging foundations, will they?"

The waves were getting bigger now, smashing over them as the sky split with a booming crack of thunder.

"I'd rather buy one of those new-fangled yacht-bungalows that move with the rising sea levels," someone said dreamily.

“You probably need a *Mars-ters* degree to even apply,” Theo blurted out.

They all stared at him.

“To go to Mars,” he explained.

There was a pause, and then another huge wave rolled over the raft. Theo swallowed a mouthful of salt water, white froth splashing his eyes. Dad was shouting something into the wind, scrambling for purchase on the edge of the life raft.

Knife-sharp fear tore into Theo’s chest. He flung himself forward, reaching for Dad’s outstretched arm. Another wave flooded the raft. When the water drained away, Dad was gone.

A scream rose up Theo’s throat. He searched the dark ocean for any sign of movement. “DAD!”

A pale hand briefly cupped the crest of a wave, then disappeared again.

Theo threw himself towards the edge of the raft, not knowing what he was going to do but needing to stop this. There was a feeling like pins and needles under his skin. Something shot from his palm – a slippery dark-green tendril that coiled into a tangled cord. The frilled rope sank into the water after Dad.

The tendril curling from his palm looked like ... seaweed? Was that possible? He’d seen that girl on the news who’d grown plants at a climate protest, but he’d dismissed it as a scam. Some kind of trick to try and go viral. But this was really happening.

An enormous pressure pulled against the strands of seaweed. Theo heaved it in, barely able to hope.

Dad broke the surface of the water, coughing as he fought to breathe. The seaweed was twisted around his chest, holding him tight. The deckhands tugged him onto the life raft as he choked on sea water.

“Dad?” Theo cried, desperately peeling away the strands of seaweed suctioned onto his father’s chest. “Are you all right?”

“Theodore? How did you do that?”

This couldn’t be real. The girl from the viral video had been *pretending*. She’d hidden vines up her sleeves. Hadn’t she?

Something was writhing under his jumper. Theo shivered, ice-cold to the bone. Slick strands of kelp trailed down his chest. The plants were still growing.

An RAF helicopter circled, a bright search beam passing overhead. But Theo just stared and stared. It was real. It was actually real.

PUBLIC SAFETY NOTICE

All parents and guardians must report any new cases of plant growth to the government by filling out [this form](#). Latest reports indicate that 3% of all young people aged 12–20 are displaying some degree of ability to grow flora. The oldest case is a 20 year old in Cambodia, and the youngest is a Russian nine year old.

All young people with the condition need to be monitored extremely closely for their own protection. The following protocol has been developed in response to several cases of suffocation due to a large mass of vegetation collecting in small rooms.

While it is important not to panic, all parents must be aware of the potential for danger.

- Do not close inward-opening doors, such as in bedrooms or bathrooms
- Keep a hammer or heavy object near to windows in case an emergency exit is needed
- Avoid car journeys on motorways without regular laybys

Investigation has found that the plants themselves are not dangerous and can be cut from the skin without damage to the young person. Do not be alarmed if the plants continue to grow after removal. Standard health and safety measures should be undertaken when handling unknown plant species.

Caroline Price my daughter has **#greenfingers**, and the way she's been treated by her school is despicable. Segregation & suspension like she's got a contagious illness! The government should be ashamed of themselves.

Edgar Warren ✓ disagree that the **#greenfingers** lunacy is a matter of public security. can't see why senators are wasting the president's time on safety briefings when warren space are still waiting for three separate bills to be put through congress

Kate Finchley BREAKING NEWS:
Teenager Found Dead, Encased Inside Tree
Trunk in Bedroom **#greenfingers**

CrossfitKing Are **#greenfingers** the new millennials?
Join the discussion over at [r/greenfingers](#).

Lola kpop updates A new study has found that eating beetroot makes **#greenfingers** stronger! More info at [mirrored.co.uk](#)

Ellie Hammond sick of these **#greenfingers** taking resources from underfunded schools. They should be pulled out of class for antisocial behaviour, not given more funding. The government needs to get off their arses instead of arguing whether it's the responsibility of the Department for Environmental Affairs or Health and Social Care. They're gonna waste another month opening up a dedicated Organization for the Management of Youth Magic before anything gets done.

Shen Zhang love that I can follow the trail of a **#greenfingers** through the city as they grow their fave plant. it's like growing cow parsley or dock leaves or whatever has become a personal graffiti tag.