

GREEN RISING

Written by

Lauren James

Based on the novel
Green Rising (Walker Books, 2021)

Tagline: When a mutation lets teenagers grow plants from their fingers, they use their new rewilding powers to pull off the ultimate heist: saving the planet.

Lauren James (laurenjamesauthor@gmail.com)

Emily Hayward-Whitlock (emily@theartistspartnership.co.uk)

INT. HESTER'S BEDROOM - TEXAS MANSION

HESTER (18, Latinx) is sleeping in an elegant four-poster bed, wearing a silk eye mask. An alarm starts playing upbeat pop music as a maid brings in a silver breakfast tray. She feeds a fluffy Pomeranian bacon from her Eggs Benedict. Outside, there's a blue pool and ocean view.

INT. THEO'S BEDROOM - ENGLISH COTTAGE

A messy, cramped attic room covered in posters and crumpled clothes. Fog mists up the icy window panes. THEO (17, Indian) is sleeping in a pair of headphones, gaming console in one hand. A cat backs up onto his face, and he bats it away.

INT. GABRIELLE'S KITCHEN - LONDON FLAT

GABRIELLE (17, white, serious) smears peanut butter onto a tortilla wrap in a dilapidated 70s kitchen. She rolls it up into a tube and hands it to her younger sister.

INTERCUT - HESTER/THEO/GABRIELLE

HESTER fastens the pearl button of an expensive suit jacket, adjusting the line of her pencil skirt and stockings. She checks her lipstick and, satisfied, kisses the mirror. It leaves a perfect lipstick print on the glass.

THEO pushes the cat off a flannel shirt on the floor, sniffs it and pulls it over his head.

GABRIELLE stands wedged into a crowded bus aisle in school uniform.

HESTER boards a helicopter behind her father, ANTHONY DALEPORT (50s, white businessman, protein shake/golf fanatic).

THEO jumps into the back of a mud-splattered four-by-four with a collie, which bumps its way down a country lane by the sea. The sun is barely up.

THEO/HESTER/GABRIELLE: Yawning.

The pink lipstick print on Hester's mirror oozes something green. It slides down the glass onto the marble counter, collecting in a pool of green slime.

CROWD (PRE-LAP)
(chanting)
CLIMATE CHANGE IS NOT A LIE, DO NOT
LET OUR PLANET DIE!

EXT. LONDON STREET - MORNING

A shot of a crowd of protesters. The signs on their banners read 'GREEN RISING'.

Gabrielle steps off the bus into the protest. A boy is painting blue and green Earth face paint on people's cheeks.

GABRIELLE

Ey, do me? Cheers!

Freshly painted, she pushes her way to the front of the crowd, who are standing outside a fancy London hotel. Security guards watch impassively from behind barriers reading 'FUEL SUMMIT 2032'.

GABRIELLE/CROWD

No more coal, no more oil! Keep our carbon in the soil!

Gabrielle looks around, dissatisfied. She pushes through the crowd and jumps over the barrier, standing on a planter full of DYING PLANTS. Slipping down the side of the hotel, she passes a digital advertising board playing the news. Headlines read 'NYC FLOODED; BEES EXTINCT; ICE CAPS MELTING'.

INT. FISHING BOAT - NORTH SEA

Establishing shot: a small fishing boat out on the rough, grey ocean water. An oil rig is crouched on the horizon like a looming beast.

RADIO (V.O)

. . . a climate change protest in central London. Meanwhile, Warren Space have released the first wave of tickets for their Martian base tours, scheduled to launch in 2037.

THEO lugs a crate of iced fish through the boat's cabin when the deck tips. He's thrown to his knees. A deafening alarm starts. Water floods in through the hull. Wiping blood from his jaw, Theo grapples his way up the stairs onto deck.

Below the water, the hull scrapes against a wellhead platform marked with 'DALEX' in orange paint.

EXT. DALEX OIL RIG - COAST OF TEXAS

'DALEX' in the same orange paint. This time, it's painted on the side of an oil rig in calmer, blue seas.

A crane hangs over the water. Hester's helicopter approaches the landing pad.

ANTHONY

Remember to ask Senator Williams how his daughter's swim meet went, Hester.

HESTER

On it, Dad.

ANTHONY

Put some mustard on your accent. You know the investors find it reassuring.

HESTER

(pronounced Texan drawl)
Sure thing, Pa.

A group of businessmen are browsing a buffet of pastries on the deck, including EDGAR WARREN (30s, nerdy, vape pen).

POLITICIAN

New Zealand's best. But their construction permits are so slow for underground bunkers. I can give you my contact . . .

When Hester and Anthony join them, staff immediately hand them china cups of coffee.

SENATOR

Daleport! Another Harvard man, aren't you?

ANTHONY

(cheerily)
Class of '98!

EXT. LONDON HOTEL

Gabrielle stands in an alleyway at the rear of the hotel by an overflowing dumpster. She pulls off her school tie, leaving her in a blouse and skirt. A CATERER enters the staff entrance with a key card. She slips in behind him.

INTERCOM (V.O.)

The Dalex Energy presentation begins in the Lilac Room in 5 minutes.

Gabrielle smashes a fire alarm with her elbow, then follows the stream of staff and conference attendees out of the hotel. The sound of alarms continue as we cut back to -

EXT. FISHING BOAT - OCEAN

Theo helps the deckhands to uncoil tubes of a bilge pump, then joins his DAD (40s, bearded, white) at the helm, activating the emergency radio beacon.

THEO

What did we hit?

DAD

Bloody Dalex didn't mark their wellhead platform.

(into radio)

Coast guard, this is Carthew on the River Song. We've had a collision at coordinates five-seven . . .

EXT. LONDON STREET - MORNING

As the hotel fire alarm continues, the fuel businessmen gather in the small space in front of the protest, watching uncomfortably. Their orange lanyards read 'DALEX'.

CROWD

This world is not for sale, your pipeline plans will fail!

Grinning, Gabrielle starts passing out leaflets to the business men. She coughs, and bends over. The crowd bumps against her. Something green twists underneath her fingernail, flexing like it's trying to get free.

EXT. DINGHY - OCEAN

Theo helps his dad onto a life raft as their boat tips into the rolling waves. A net of wriggling fish lies abandoned nearby. The alarm is louder and faster.

DAD

We didn't lose anyone, lads. And this is what insurance is for.

RADIO (V.O.)

Coastguards are fifteen minutes out.

Deckhands in bulky lifejackets cram onto the lifeboat. Theo shivers violently, teeth chattering. The fishing boat sinks into the waves, bright red from warning lights.

A huge wave rolled over the raft, and Dad is flung overboard.

THEO
(screaming)
Dad!

He reaches out into the water. Something green pulses under the skin of his palm.

EXT. LONDON STREET - MORNING

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

A stem bursts from Gabrielle's hand, twisting a vine up her arms, reaching towards the sky. She is scared, but thrilled. Screams spread through the crowd, as the plants grow over the FUEL SUMMIT banners.

CROWD (CONT'D)
It's time for a change! The
temperature is rising, but SO ARE
WE!

EXT. DINGHY - OCEAN

A slippery dark-green tendril coils out of Theo's palm in a tangled cord. The frilled rope sinks into the water after Dad. He heaves on the vine, pulling Dad from the water. Deckhands tug him onto the life boat. Seaweed is twisted around his chest.

THEO
Dad? Are you all right?

DAD
(choking)
Theodore? How did you do that?

A helicopter circles overhead.

TITLE CARD: Social media phone video recordings fill the screen, one after the other. A girl disappears inside a growing tree trunk. Teenagers run through a lawn, leaving a trail of buttercups and sunflowers in their wake. A stressed boy in an exam is enclosed in a giant hedge.

NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)

Latest reports indicate that 3% of all young people aged 12-20 can grow the flora. The oldest case is a twenty year old in Cambodia, and the youngest is Russian, age nine. All young people with the condition must be monitored for their own protection.

EXT. OIL RIG - TEXAS

ANTHONY leads the businessmen, including EDGAR WARREN, on a tour of the oil rig. HESTER trails behind, checking her phone.

HESTER

Careful on the steps, y'all! It does get a tad slippery, now.

ANTHONY

Our bedrock boring drill is one of the largest in the world, but a new oilfield in Iran would triple our output. The public commissioners anticipate approving our permits within the month.

On her phone, Hester watches a Instagram boomerang of a girl growing a flower out of her palm, which curls back into a bud then repeats. She flicks it away, and an ad appears which says 'PUBLIC SAFETY WARNING: PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN FROM PLANT SUFFOCATION'. The audio drowns out Anthony's speech momentarily.

ADVERT (V.O.)

Take a hammer on car journeys. Keep bedroom and bathroom doors open.

ANTHONY (V.O)

Princess?

HESTER looks up, pushing her phone up her sleeve.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Don't you agree?

HESTER

(pause)

Absol. . .utely.

She smiles at them in a rehearsed, careful fashion.

ANTHONY

Utterly spectacular! In your wildest dreams, you can't even imagine the views. Earth looked so small.

EDGAR

I've been a dozen times. Never gets old. The hiking is the best. Gotta get some of that red dust on your suit, you know.

HESTER realises what they're talking about and her fake smile turns into a real grin.

HESTER

It was the best birthday treat ever!

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE - SHUTTLE

HESTER, ANTHONY and HESTER'S MOM (40s, Latinx) are sitting in plush seats, looking down at the red surface of Mars. A cluster of white hexagonal tent domes sprawls across the dust below, with golf carts moving between them.

The private shuttle has WARREN SPACE logos on the backs of the seats. A floating bulb of appetizers hangs in zero gravity.

A screen above the window is playing a pre-recorded video of EDGAR WARREN in a metallic gold space suit.

EDGAR

Welcome to Mars! On the far right you can see the Warren Space research centre, my pride and joy!

ANTHONY wraps an arm around HESTER's shoulders.

ANTHONY

Happy eighteenth birthday, Princess.

CUT TO:

EXT. OIL RIG - TEXAS

EDGAR

We're releasing real estate plots
next quarter. I can get you all on
the wait list.

ANTHONY

(thrilled)
Thanks, Edgar!

The group walks down a narrow steel stairway, heading down to the lower deck of the oil rig. As Edgar helps Hester down the stairs, his hand slides down to her bum. She jerks away, furious.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Naturally, we'll be putting in a
bid for the energy contract on
Mars. Though I'm sure you're
batting away offers!

Algae explodes from Hester, covering the men in a giant mass of seething, pulsating froth. Horrified yelling. A bodyguard shouts into a radio in rapid Chinese.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

(livid)
HESTER. So sorry, folks. I thought
my daughter had her little issue
under control!

BUSINESSMAN

I thought the Greenfingers stunt
was all faked.

ANTHONY

(fake joviality, clenched
teeth)
Unfortunately it's very real.

HESTER

So-sorry about the m-mess!

She brushes ineffectually at some algae on Edgar's lapel with a handkerchief. It's all over him.

HESTER (CONT'D)

Well . . . I suppose the cat's out
of the bag now!
(bullshitting)
Dalex has been working on a brand
new project!

(MORE)

HESTER (CONT'D)
We're hoping to use the
Greenfingers powers to create
biofuels!

She gestures to the pool of algae around her feet.

HESTER (CONT'D)
As you can see, I'm investigating
this personally.

A smattering of laughter. A man calls off his bodyguard. Anthony's embarrassment changes to wolfish focus. He nods her on. Encouraged, Hester crouches down, and grows a pea vine from the deck, which snakes up her arm.

HESTER (CONT'D)
Firewood. Corn for bioplastics.
Vegetables for food and oxygenators
for living spaces.

She snaps off a fresh mangetout and holds it out to Edgar.

HESTER (CONT'D)
Imagine eating that on Mars.

EDGAR
(intrigued, to Anthony)
She takes after her old man, I see.

ANTHONY
My daughter's beaten me to the
punch here. But I have to say,
gentleman, our new venture would be
a sparkling addition to any
investor's portfolio. Let's talk
numbers.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - ATM MACHINE - NIGHT

A teenage boy with a baseball cap pulled down over his face looks around him, then pushes his hand against the cash slot on an ATM machine. A tendril snakes out of his cuff and disappears inside the machine. There's a crack, and the front comes loose. He reaches inside and he pulls free two cassette full of bank notes, sprinting off down the street.

CUT TO:

INT. THEO'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Zoom out, to reveal this is a video that Theo is watching on social media. He double-taps, liking the video. He's lying on the sofa with seaweed is tangled in his hair. In the background Theo's dad and Mum (40s, Indian) are in the kitchen.

On the TV, GABRIELLE is being interviewed in a news studio.

NEWS REPORTER

What's it like to be the first with magic? I bet you're being flooded with sponsorship deals!

GABRIELLE

It's the new normal now, isn't it? I was only the first of millions! I'm nothing special. But I do have something to say while the world's eyes are on me.

(to camera)

We need climate action, desperately. This emergency is real, dangerous, and it's going to get much worse if we don't make changes to the way we create energy. Right now. Whatever our spineless government says.

NEWS REPORTER

(clearing throat)

Well! Next up, Angela is going to show us how to make turmeric blancmange!

Theo absently tugs away kelp off his stomach and drops it into an overflowing tub next to the bed.

MUM

(arguing in kitchen)

But if we don't get the boat insurance money, how are we going to pay the mortgage? We can't afford -

DAD

BLOODY DALEX SHOULD PAY FOR IT! It was their damn rig that did the damage!

THEO

(into phone)

Search 'jobs for greenfingers'.

PHONE

Do you have plant magic? Fill out this quick survey to unlock new opportunities in your area!

Theo types out his answers.

MUM

Are you sure your brother doesn't have anything going down at the farm? Even if you have to get up at sparrow's fart for the commute, it's better'n nothing.

DAD

Drought killed all the crops. Sounds like they're going to have to evacuate within the month anyway if that cliff collapses.

MUM

You'll have to unload containers at the docks. There's nothing else for it.

DAD

Drones. It's all automated drones now.

As soon as he clicks the form, his phone rings.

THEO

(shocked)
Er, hello?

INTERVIEWER (V.O)

(American voice)
Is this Theodore Carthew speaking?
I'm calling in regard to the job application you made today.

THEO

Like, five seconds ago?!

INTERVIEWER (V.O)

(American voice)
Indeed. Our client is an international conglomerate searching for the best and brightest. We'd like to bring you in for an interview. We can provide transportation.

THEO
Oh, sure! To Manchester?

INTERVIEWER (V.O)
(American voice)
To Texas.

Theo gapes at his phone. Seaweed bubbles in his throat.

THEO
(choking)
That would be fine!

INT. TRAINING GROUNDS - GREENHOUSE - DAY

HESTER and ANTHONY are walking through an exquisite Edwardian glasshouse. She runs her hands over rows of seedlings, which blossom into flower and fruit.

ANTHONY
It's looking excellent. I really didn't like the idea of you having these powers at first. It's so ... vulgar. But it does seem to be opening up some big opportunities for the firm.

Outside, a row of black cars pull up and a group of teenagers with suitcases climb out, including a nervous THEO.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
Do you need me to intro you to the recruits, or can you handle them on your own?

HESTER
(surprised)
You want me to lead the project?

ANTHONY
Princess, you've been shadowing me since you were six years old. In a decade you'll be CEO. You're more than ready to run your own department.

A joyful sunflower bursts into marvellous flower behind her.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)
(grimacing)
Just get yourself under control, OK?

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

You managed to get rid of that old stutter. Why is this any different?

HESTER

I've been working on it. Sorry.

ANTHONY

Now, don't let them bully you. This is your demographic, remember - it's the perfect opportunity to showcase your public engagement training. And you can fire anyone who doesn't respect you.

HESTER

Love you, Dad.

HESTER walks out to greet the group, nervous.

HESTER (CONT'D)

Hello, everyone! I'm Hester Daleport. I'm the executive who will be leading this experimental greenfingers test group. Welcome to Dalex!

THEO

(livid)

Did you say Dalex? The oil company?

Full synopsis

The year the ice caps finally finished melting, teenagers around the world started developing magic.

A global warming heist about the importance of individual action in a time where moral and ethical decisions are being made by profit-hungry organisations. Set in the near-future, three teenagers - Gabrielle, a climate change activist; Theo, an English fisherman's son and Hester, the heir to an oil fortune - fight to rise up and restore the world to good health, against the wishes of companies who continue to profit from climate change.

Gabrielle is skipping school to attend a protest against climate change in her city's centre when tendrils of roots start growing from her fingertips. She stands in the middle of the vegetation, still holding onto her banner. IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE, it reads.

An English boy called Theodore is helping his dad bring in the day's catch of fish.

Their boat has a collision with the nearby Dalex oil rig, and their ship sinks. Theo saves his dad's life by growing seaweed from his hands, using it as a rope to pull him to safety on a life raft.

Hester is shadowing her father as he gives some investors a tour of their oil fracking rig off the coast of California. Her dad is bragging about the recent family vacation he surprised Hester and her mom with, going to see the new Mars settlement in one of the commercial Warren Space shuttles. Hester accidentally floods the deck of the rig with algae when she gets angry, finding that she control the algae.

She pitches the idea of using the Green Fingers teenagers to start a new revenue stream for their company - growing plants to burn as biofuels. They could even use it for the new settlement on Mars as an easy supply of energy, fresh food and bioplastics.

It would be a huge boon for Dalex if they could win the energy contract for Mars with Warren Space. Hester's dad puts her in charge of leading a training project for Green Fingers recruits, to test out the theory.

Theo gets interviewed to work for an energy company as a Greenfingers. He's flown to Texas to start a training program, and will be able to support his parents while they try to find jobs.

When he arrives, Hester and her dad give an introductory speech, and he realises that his new employers are Dalex - who own the oil rig that wrecked their boat, and is damaging the ocean by his home. He gets into a fight with Hester when she implies the biofuels project will fix climate change - something created due to her company's carbon emissions.

During the first day's training session, the Greenfingers find that their powers are amplified beyond their control when they work together. A girl nearly dies when an apple seed sprouts into a tree in her stomach, and Theo saves her life by stopping the plant from growing. His actions stop him from being fired for yelling at Hester that first night.

That night, Hester is at a political campaign party when she bumps into Edgar Warren, the owner of Warren Space. She pitches him the biofuels project, impressing him with a demonstration of her powers. While drunk, he gives Dalex the energy contract.

The next morning, Hester and Theo find that overnight their training grounds have turned into a woodland - their training session the day before caused every plant and seed around them to grow overnight and destroying the buildings.

Hester quickly calls a press conference, pretending this was intentional, and uses the opportunity to announce the Warren Space venture to the world.

Theo still hates Hester, Dalex and everything they're doing to the planet - but his parents need the money he's earning. They take the trainees out to sea on Hester's family yacht, and experiment with growing aquatic plants in the water. First, they use seaweed to create a net that pulls all of the rubbish out of the water, and then bag it up in the boat. But they accidentally make an algae bloom, creating a dead zone in the ocean.

Theo and Hester have a big fight, both wanting to use the training to do different things - Theo wants to try to heal the planet where climate change and deforestation are killing plants, but Hester wants to focus on the Mars contract.

She doesn't believe climate change is a big issue. It's only then that she realises her dad has been feeding her propaganda about climate science, raising her to think that it isn't real. Betrayed by her dad, Hester joins Theo in a mission to save Earth using their powers.

Edgar Warren comes to see the training session and arranges to take the group to the International Space Station, so they can test the Greenfingers powers in space.

They contact a climate change protest group, getting in touch with the first girl to grow plants, Gabrielle. She comes out to meet them at a Dalex coal factory, where Hester and Theo have taken the trainees for another test activity. They're going to use plants to pull toxic metals out of the soil around the factory, where decades of coal ash left in ponds as slurry have leaked into the groundwater.

Gabrielle is more interested in sabotaging the factory, however. She grows a vine into the ground, breaking through a water pipe and sending bindweed up into the factory's basements. She floods it, filling the building with plants and shutting the factory down.

On a flight, Theo discovers that he can link up with the Greenfingers on the ground below, tapping into their powers and using them to make big changes to the ground, like pulling the pollution out of a river in a net of seaweed.

Hester discovers that Edgar and her dad plan to use the Greenfingers and a solar sail built in space at the ISS to melt the polar ice caps and extract the oil underground. With Gabrielle, they make a plan to stop this. They will destroy the solar sail while training on the ISS, and at the same time hold a 'green rising'.

They will sabotage the worst polluters all around the world: factories, oil rigs and mines everywhere. They won't give up until the governments agree to meet their demands - to transition to renewable energy sources, end pollution, and start carbon storage immediately.

Hester flies to Svalbard to find evidence proving that her dad is going to open up the Northern oil fields once the ice caps melt. She finds evidence that he held solar seeding experiments decades before, spraying chemicals into the sky to try to absorb sunlight. She decides to use this to ruin her dad's reputation and stop his actions - by filing a lawsuit against him.

They launch into space, and arrive on the space station with Edgar. Hester's dad is angry at Hester, and arranges for her to be sent to Mars. Edgar is planning to use the Arctic oil they'll extract to terraform Mars by building thousands of solar sails.

After destroying the solar sail he wants to use to melt the Arctic ice, they realise that they might be able to use their time on the space station to do something similar on a larger scale, linking up with the Greenfingers on an entire continent and using their strength to restore balance to nature.

With Gabrielle's help on Earth, they grow forests and pull waste out of the waters from the space station as it orbits the earth. They bring the rubbish in the oceans together into a giant island, which they cover in seagrass, algae, coral and kelp, turning it into a new natural landmass. Meanwhile, Gabrielle orchestrates her rebels as they take control of factories and release a statement of demands to the governments. Hester's lawsuit is released, which reveals that her dad is responsible for the Greenfingers mutation - the chemicals from his failed solar seeding experiment made their way into the water supply, and from there into fetuses born decades before.

A year later, nature is starting to flourish again. With new forests across the planet, carbon emissions have dropped dramatically, and the waste islands out in the ocean have become hubs for wind turbines, creating electricity from the high winds at sea to use in cities.

Change is spreading across the planet, a little at a time. And the temperature of the planet has stopped rising. There's a long way to go, but people are working on it.