

Praise for *My Green Style*

“This book had me hooked right from the start! I loved learning about eco-activism in the fashion industry and came away inspired to make changes.

— Leslie Ann Gentile, author of
Elvis, Me, and the Lemonade-Stand Summer

“*My Green Style* is an eco-fiction focused on the fashion industry and how our obsession with celebrity style becomes toxic when magnified by the rabbit-hole of Instagram. A story with heart that celebrates youth activism, *My Green Style* will inspire you to find creative ways of making the world a better place.”

— Amanda West Lewis, award-winning author of *September 17*,
These Are Not the Words, and *Focus. Click. Wind.*

Praise for *Outta Here* by Lea Beddia

“[W]ell-written and very realistic. Beddia does a solid job of dealing with heavy topics including drug addiction, violence, emotional trauma, and the complications that being a family can bring. Élise, as the protagonist, is a strong female character that shows the reader what resilient young people can do to stand up for themselves while planning for a successful future . . . I can’t say enough great things about this book. Highly Recommended. ★★★★★”

— CM: *Canadian Review of Materials*

“Élise is a powerhouse of a character . . . A heartbreaking testament to saving oneself.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“A gripping, propulsive story that will have the by-product of giving high school students in difficult home situations a blueprint for a way through. Élise and the other characters populating this book are so utterly real. It’s hard to believe this is Beddia’s second novel. I look forward to reading more from Lea Beddia.”

— Bev Katz Rosenbaum, author of *I’m Good and Other Lies*

“Sharp, sensitive, and honest, *Outta Here* reminds us of how much resilience it takes to be a teenager in today’s world. With care and attention, Lea Beddia explores food insecurity, drug addiction, and the importance of being honest with the people who care about us. Her writing is beautiful, compassionate, and true.”

— Liana Cusmano, author of *Catch and Release*

“Beddia’s *Outta Here* is gritty, fast-paced contemporary realism about Élise’s struggles to break free of a life predetermined by her mother’s painkiller addiction. This page-turner will keep readers concerned and rooting for Élise as she confronts drug abuse, shame, daring to want more, and a deadly stranger who threatens not only Élise’s safety but that of her family and friends.”

— Paul Coccia, author of *On the Line*

My Green Style



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Lea Beddia

James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers
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To Patrick, Dylan, and Éloïse
This world needs more of what you've got.



Chapter One

Clothing Drive

I sink into the garbage bags like they're a beanbag chair. The air *pffftts* out. They're filled with clothes for the drive. Weeks of putting the clothing drive together and we're finally done. I'm proud of the work my friends and I have done. But there is so much of it.

"Off your butt," Ally says. "The shelter closes in twenty minutes." She rearranges some desks back into place to leave the classroom the way Mr. Deems asked us to.

"We can't donate them to the shelter," I say. I try to stand, but I've sunk in too deep. I need to turn on my side and extend a leg, then crawl off the bag.

"Keri asked us to bring them today," Ally says.

"The shelter doesn't have the space or time to sort through it all." I wave a hand at the eight garbage bags. "I checked with the volunteers. Keri didn't realize they'll

end up on the curb if we bring them there. Then they'll sit in a landfill for ten thousand years. Or be burned and cause more air pollution." I finally gain my balance and stand. I can tell my hair is going in different directions from all the static. I pull it back but I don't have anything to tie it up. "Maybe I can turn these piles into a comfy sofa."

"They'd throw them out?" Ally asks. "What about the women at the shelter?" She pulls an elastic off her wrist and hands it to me.

"They've got more than they can give away," I say. I try to catch the flyaway hairs, but I hate doing this without a mirror.

"What do we do with it all?" Ally asks.

"I called several thrift stores yesterday. Renaissance will take them," I say. "But we won't make it before they close. Tomorrow?" I ask.

"Sure," Ally says. She turns me around and pulls my hair back into a ponytail so I can tie it up.

"Thanks. I think it's time for a haircut," I say.

"Maybe some highlights, too? Pink streaks?" Ally is teasing me. She loves changing her hair colour any chance she gets, but the thought of putting chemicals in my hair, and then sending them down the drain and into the river makes me appreciate my simple, wavy brown hair.

"How come you're still here?" Keri walks into the classroom. "Mr. Deems says he's leaving. We have to go." Mr. Deems is our leadership supervisor. He lets us use his classroom, but doesn't actually supervise us. He's probably in the staffroom poring over our project reports. "The shelter is expecting you," Keri says, looking at her phone. "Now."

“They won’t take the stuff,” Ally says. “Pearl already checked.”

“I called them last week,” Keri says. She checks her phone again, confirming her schedule. She writes everything down. Every. Little. Thing. It’s annoying, but she’s also super reliable.

“I believe you,” I say. I haul a bag over my shoulder. “But they don’t have the room. They must have received other donations since then. I’ll take them to Renaissance tomorrow.”

“Renaissance sells clothes. We were supposed to give them away to people who can’t afford to buy new stuff,” Keri says. She taps a bag with her shoe.

“If the shelter needs more, Renaissance won’t charge them. But the clothes will be thrown out if we bring them to the shelter now. And sit in a landfill, and—”

“But we worked so hard,” Keri cuts me off. “But thanks for calling them first.” She opens the planner on her phone to see what is up for next week. “You’ll bring them to Renaissance, so that means the clothing drive is done.” She swoops a finger across her screen. “Next order of business: The fashion show. I’m thinking a red-carpet theme. You know, celebrity styles, Met Gala-esque gowns.”

I drop the bag and it deflates. Keri scrunches her curls.

“Met Gala gowns? We can’t get those,” Ally says.

“It has to be glamorous! Lots of people need to show up. Our project proposal stated we would raise at least...” Keri scrolls her phone again. “...fifteen hundred dollars to donate to the senior New York City trip. And a Met Gala theme would be soooo New York.” Keri shows us her

screen filled with pictures she's saved from last year's Gala. Lush gowns cover the marble steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Fifth Avenue. Nothing could be more glamorous. And expensive.

"Even knock-offs of those dresses are too expensive," Ally says.

"I have an idea," I say. Keri peels her eyes away from her phone. This is how we work. Keri is always first to come up with something. Then Ally will tone down Keri's showy ideas and I come up with a practical solution. We usually end up working all-nighters, but we always figure it out.

"Let's hear it," Ally says.

"We can use some of the clothes from the drive," I say. "We have more than what Renaissance needs, I'm sure."

"The used clothes?" Keri asks. "Why?"

"We can restyle them. I can sew on embellishments or pair them with newer items."

"New-er?" Keri says. "But not new? This is a fashion show, Pearl. People will expect the hottest fashions."

"I think people want to see what cool styles they can afford. I mean, most of our classmates are counting on the fundraiser to be able to go on the trip. So, showing clothes that are not in their budget might not be helpful," I say.

Keri is quiet.

"She's right," Ally says. "We want as many people as possible to buy tickets to the fashion show, right? To raise enough money?"

"Good point," Keri says.

"Then we should have items students can buy," I say.

Keri is still quiet. “You know it’s a good idea.”

“You’re right, but we can’t show off clothes that students just donated. That would be a little weird? Embarrassing? It has to be new stuff.”

“We can upcycle,” I say. Keri scrunches her curls again. No answer. “Turn the old stuff into new stuff. Take fabric from one piece and put it together with fabric from another to create something new. The clothes would be unrecognizable.”

“It sounds like Frankenstein fashion,” Keri says, laughing to herself. She stops when neither Ally nor I laugh with her. “We need a successful fashion show. You need it to be a success, to include it in your portfolio, right?” She knows how to get my attention.

I was accepted into the fashion design program at College Vieux Montreal. But I need to submit a portfolio by the end of June to be accepted into the textile creation specialty. I’m supposed to gain experience working in the industry, which I don’t have yet. My portfolio is almost done, but I was relying on the fashion show for the experience portion. Keri is right. If I want my portfolio to stand out, then the fashion show needs to be a hit. For that to happen, I don’t think we can showcase the clothes students donated. It might be embarrassing for them.

But when I think of how I can make old clothes look funky and interesting, it might encourage people to reuse their old clothes instead of donating them. Donation boxes everywhere are overflowing.

“I can pull this off,” I say. “We can,” I add.

“It’s a great idea,” Ally agrees.

“It’s going to take time. You’re talking about sewing new stuff,” says Keri.

“We’ve always pulled off our projects. If we all pitch in,” I remind her.

Keri opens one of the garbage bags. The contents tumble out onto the classroom floor. She unfolds some items, throwing them onto a desk. She fingers a rip on a wool dress. Rubs her fingers over a stain on a cool sweatshirt with a lacey collar. “We can’t use this stuff in a fashion show,” Keri says. “Do you want to attend a fashion show where this is on stage?” She holds the sweatshirt up against her chest. I can hear her sniff the fabric. She makes a displeased face. I see the stain. But the beautiful trim around the collar can be cut off and added to a belt that would look great around the dress with the rip. Rips can be patched up with other parts of the sweatshirt. “We should throw this stuff out. Did you go through it?” Keri says.

“I can use them,” I say.

“Use what? This stuff is in tatters,” Keri says.

“Not all of it. Parts can be saved.” I pick up the sweatshirt. “Cleaned and used again.”

“Be my guest.” She lobbs the clothes at me. I catch the sweater but the dress falls. I stuff them into the open bag and try to hold it all together.

“I can create something unique. Fewer items will end up in a landfill,” I say.

“This again? Trash exists,” Keri says.

“We can have so much less. In Quebec, 124,000 tons of clothing is burned each year. It could be repaired and reused or recycled. We can show people how.”

“Recycled? How are you supposed to recycle sweaters?” Keri asks. I’ve already talked about this. I explained the process when we were choosing our projects and I wanted to start up a sewing club to show people how to repair their clothing. Keri said it would take too long to teach people. She was right, and we decided on the clothing drive. I shouldn’t have agreed. I knew we’d end up with a bunch of clothes to get rid of.

“We’ll talk about this more tomorrow. We need to head out. Can you still take it to Renaissance?” Keri asks.

“No problem,” I say. I twist the open bag to carry it over my shoulder.

I know we’ll find a solution. I wouldn’t have chosen Keri as a partner, but Mr. Deems selected our groups for the year. Keri is hard-working and organized, but she likes things done her way. I also know planning this will cause some disagreement, and maybe some frustration. But eventually we’ll come to an understanding. I wish we could skip ahead to that part.