

# Indigo

## Elisa Hall

My name is Skye Quince. This is the story of my accidental deviation. Because I was a girl the aspirations for me were to want a man and children, and to make something of my life. To be a nurse, or a vet, or have a shop. And a mortgaged house with attractive but bland interiors. Somehow I got that all wrong. Oops.

When I was three I had a best friend named Sofia Angelopoulos. I thought she was really lucky to have the word angel in her name and that maybe that meant she was one. The first time I saw her she wore a dress the colour of the settling sky, a shimmering indigo. The colour made me want to put it in my mouth and suck it. Her hair was dense and black and plaited and crawled down her neck and I loved that. Sofia had a little fluffy monkey backpack with straps and a lead. She was a runner. We met at day care. During quiet time we lay on small mattresses on the floor but instead of sleeping I would watch the breath go in and out of Sofia's open lips. She was exceptional at going straight to sleep. She was magic. Her little hand folded up in mine for games, for skipping and story time. We were happy when our parents came to collect us but I was happiest shining in the galaxy of my twinness with her.

My next love was Lola in High School. She was a scrapper with a husky voice. Lola developed early, wore tight jeans and wrote sexy notes to the boys. She charged them money to show them her breasts behind the shelter shed while I kept lookout. Lola was insouciant. I sat next to her all day and then after school we would go to her house, lay on her bed listening to music and kiss. When Lola got a boyfriend I was devastated. I was jealous and sulked and wouldn't talk to her.

'Suit yourself,' she said. 'But you're being a fuckwit. What we did was just practise. You know, for the real thing.'

I never had a boyfriend. They didn't look at me nor me at them I was just Lola's friend. I didn't make the right shapes. I dressed like when I was little, shorts and sneakers and baggy t shirts, and I could throw a ball as well as any of them. I found out there was a name for me. I wasn't a Quince after all, I was a Lemon. I didn't want to be a girl but I didn't want to be a boy either. Lola and I drifted apart.

I went to a climate change rally and found River and we became River and Skye. She carried a sign that said 'There is no plan B.' What hope did we have? River laced our hands together and took me somewhere where I made sense. No-one called me names. The people she knew folded me into their arms with expressions of wonderment and gave me something bigger to see.

I took River home and my mother looked at us and said, 'Is this who you are now?'

And I said 'Yes.'

River cherished me and kissed me on the mouth. Through her I saw what I might be. There was no hiding, we were kindred. I became an activist, a collectivist. I blockaded. I tied myself to trees. My real mother was the land, nature didn't care whether I was a boy or a girl. Everyone wore the same clothes out there, had the same hair. We were clippered, unwashed. The earth loved me back and showered me with birdsong and waterfalls. I had talismans of feathers, of stones and driftwood. The trees were welcoming, they had their own language.

By listening to the whisperings of the earth I'd unshackled myself. I no longer thought that I was missing out on an ordinary life, I realised that I had an extraordinary one. Me and River, joined into the vast beauty of the exceptionality of nature. I didn't want a life with buildings or concrete. I didn't want a room the colour of dust. River and I lay in our swag and watched the sky turn the colour of Sofia's dress from all those years ago. Something in my heart sang quietly. River drew poems on my back with her fingers and I knew I'd been woken up.