

REBELLING FOR LIFE

How has the climate crisis changed you as a person and as a writer?

It has shaken me to the core, put me on antidepressants and obsessed me. It's also reinforced the values with which I was brought up, but which I set to one side as an overworked mum and consumer. Now I feel the same love for trees that made my father weep when one of 'ours' had to be cut down, and the same connection to the natural world under threat that my busyness had blocked.

For years, as I absorbed the truth about climate, I thought that I could consider my fiction my own particular kind of activism. That was convenient, because writing is what I love and do best. It made sense because I believed in the power of fiction to effect both personal and societal change, and I haven't lost faith in that power, but scale makes a difference and eventually I recognised that without a big publisher I'm deluding myself.

In *START*, written before I realised just how quickly breakdown would be upon us, and what that would mean around the world, Venice goes under, and it's the alarm the West needs. It was harrowing to write, but much less harrowing than the future as science now foresees it. When I resolved to write exclusively about climate change in my novels and short stories, I had already reached a point where my self-styled *keyboard warrior* identity could no longer excuse me from physical action. My (then) publishers Magic Oxygen had already rushed out an e-book called *THE BIGGEST SPLASH* in which four women take direct action to new limits, shocking the few who downloaded it. After speaking at Preston New Road fracking site about the role of stories in the world, I began adapting my own experience with *Extinction Rebellion 2018-19* into a novel, which I released chapter by chapter on my website, a few weeks behind real time, under the title *FOR LIFE*. It's now an e-book and can be downloaded for a donation to XR. It's not my story, because it's populated with fictional characters, but I've been in the same locations

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If you want to read words from the heart of a true activist, understand the real connection between depression and climate crisis and connect with the natural human instinct to rebel, read this beautiful and moving book.

Emma Thompson

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