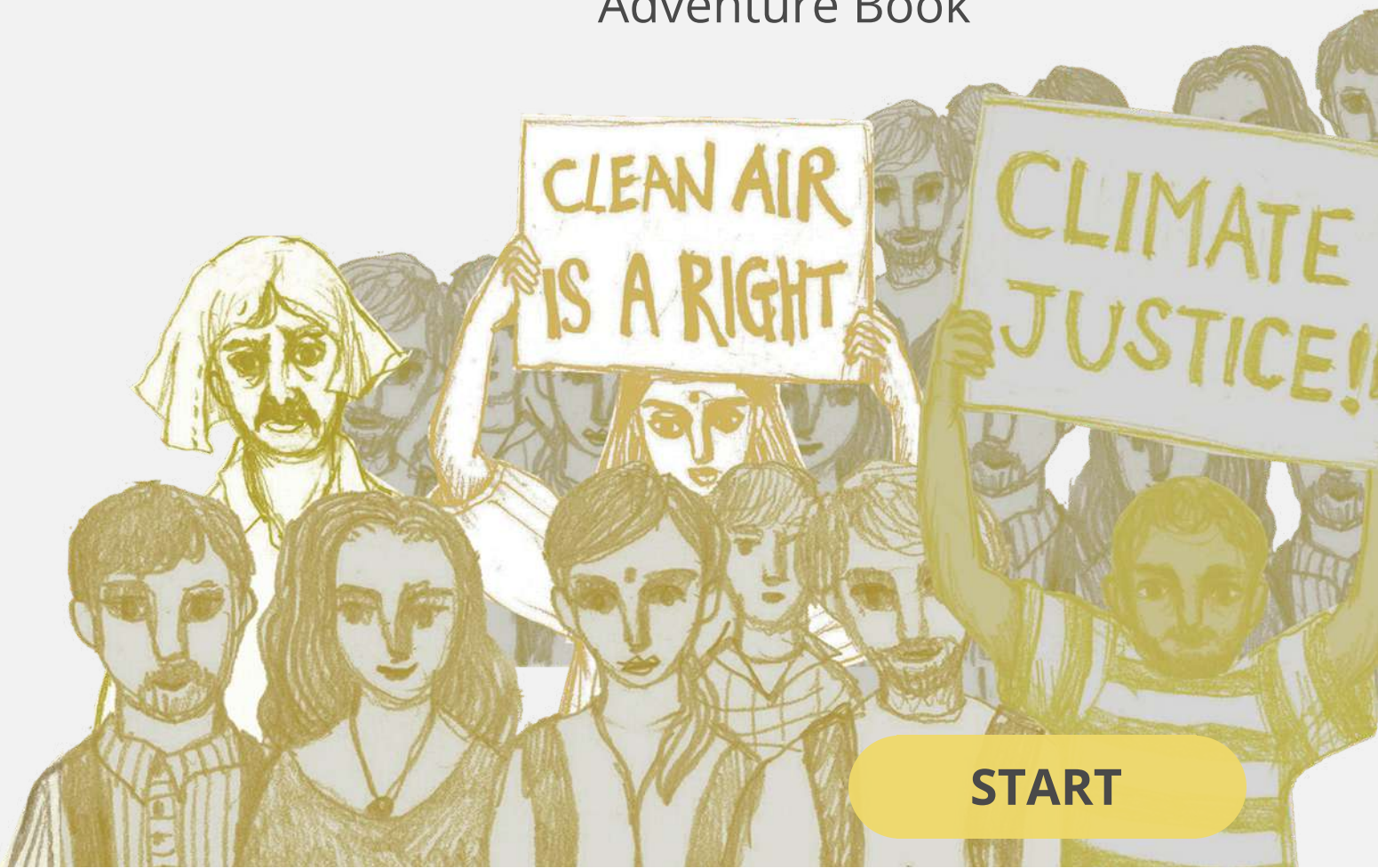
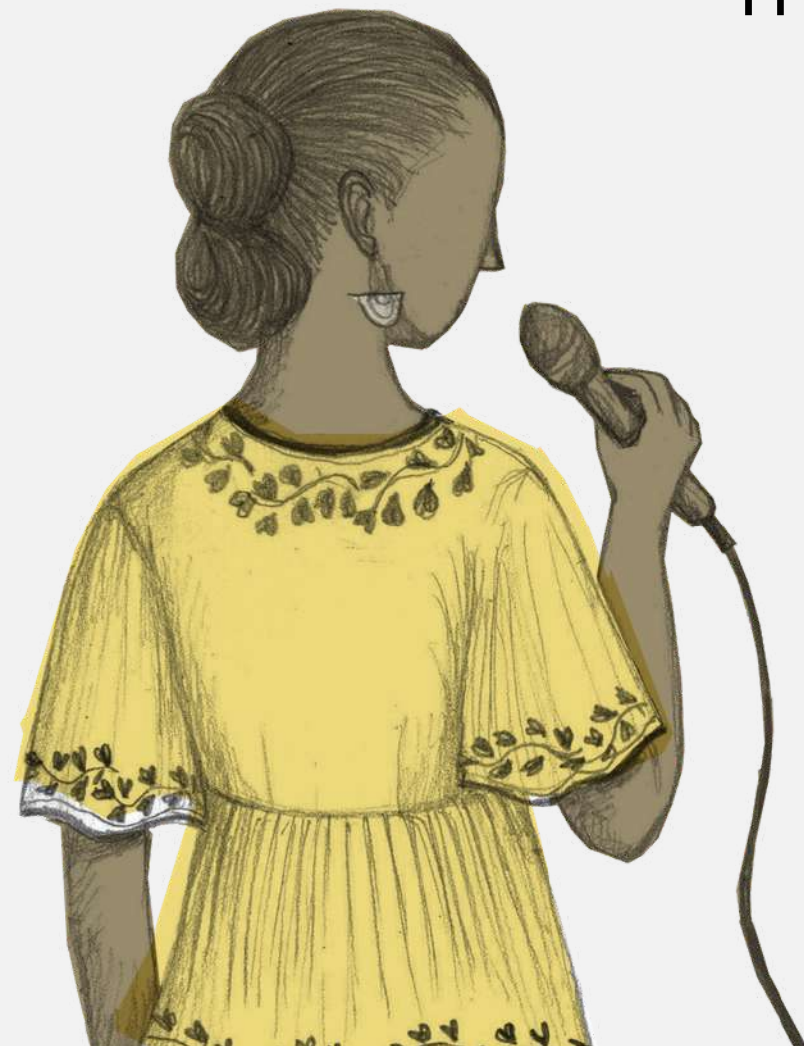




BREATHLESS SKIES: THE CITY THAT FORGOT TO BREATHE

Adventure Book



START

The sun does not rise in New Delhi anymore. It presses down.

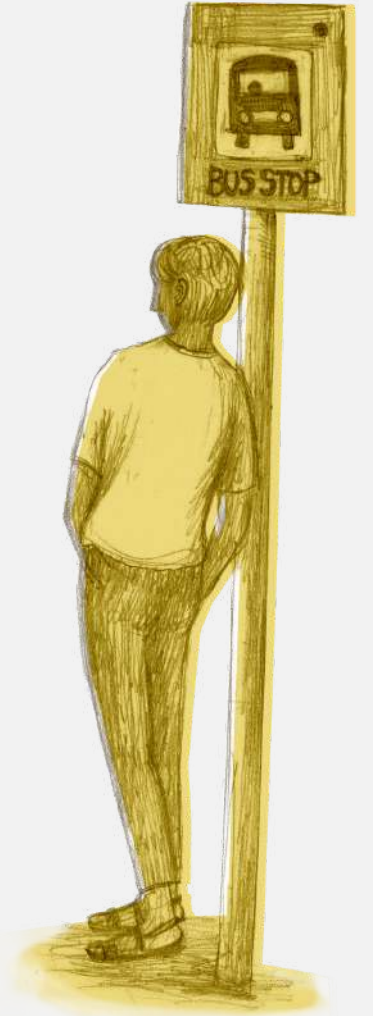
You wake before it fully appears, already sweating. The ceiling fan turns slowly above you, pushing warm air in tired circles. Outside, the skyline trembles in a pale haze – not fog, not mist. Smog.

You check your phone.

Air Quality Index: 487. Hazardous.

You stare at the number. You left Bangladesh after the sea swallowed your neighbourhood. You thought the hardest thing to escape was water. You were wrong.

By the time you step outside, the pavement burns through your sandals. The air feels thick, as if breathing requires permission. A man at the bus stop leans against a pole, dizzy. No one looks surprised.



CONTINUE

Your phone vibrates. Message from Meera Sharma (Principal): "School closed today due to extreme heat conditions." Closed again. Music rooms sealed. Windows shut. Practice postponed. Heat does not just exhaust you. It interrupts you.

By noon, the sky turns yellow-grey. The sun becomes a blurred disc behind dust. Power cuts ripple through the neighbourhood. Fans stop. Air-conditioners die. The room becomes an oven. Your chest tightens slightly – not panic, just air too heavy to move easily. Another message arrives. Rafi, your neighbour from the school science club, texts again: "Heat index crossing 52°C. We're mapping hotspots. Need volunteers."

Outside, Tara's voice rises from the street. Tara always sounds fearless, even when her hands shake around the megaphone: "Clean air is a right!"



Sirens echo in the distance.

The city is holding its breath. And so are you. You stand by the window, listening to Tara's chants below. Your music notebook lies open on your desk.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Help Rafi
map heat
and pollution
hotspots. Go
to page 5



Join Tara in
the street
protest. Go
to page 3



Stay home
and write a
song about
the heat. Go
to page 7



Why the Heat Feels Different in Cities?

Cities trap heat. Concrete and asphalt absorb sunlight during the day and release it slowly at night, creating what scientists call the urban heat island effect.

Air pollution makes it worse. Tiny particles in the air irritate lungs and reduce the body's ability to cope with extreme temperatures. When heat and pollution combine, hospital admissions for respiratory and cardiovascular illness rise sharply.

By the early 2030s, heat indices above 50°C are no longer rare in megacities like New Delhi.

Heat is not just weather.

It is vulnerability exposed.

Source:

EPA, "What Are Heat Islands?" <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/what-are-heat-islands>;

WHO, "Heat and health," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

Delhi Disaster Management Authority, "Delhi Heat Action Plan 2024-25," <https://ddma.delhi.gov.in/>

You step into the heat because staying inside feels worse. The heat hits immediately, thick and unmoving. Tara stands near the corner with a megaphone, sweat darkening the collar of her yellow kurta. The crowd is small. The air feels heavier than it did that morning. “Cooling shelters now!”

You join the chant, but your throat burns after only a few words. The asphalt radiates heat through your sandals.

A police vehicle slows. “Heat advisory. Return indoors.”



Return where? No one answers. Then a woman near the front sways and collapses. The chanting stops at once. Someone kneels. Someone calls for an ambulance. Tara lowers the megaphone without speaking.

The protest dissolves into quiet urgency.

CONTINUE



During extreme heat events, the body struggles to regulate internal temperature. When humidity and pollution are high, sweating becomes less effective and respiratory stress increases.

Urban heat islands can raise street-level temperatures several degrees above official forecasts, especially in neighbourhoods with little shade or green space.

Heat-related collapse is rarely sudden.

It is cumulative.

Source:

EPA, "What Are Heat Islands?" <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/what-are-heat-islands>

WHO, "Heat and health," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

By the time the ambulance leaves, the street is nearly empty. The asphalt still shimmers as if nothing happened.

Shouting felt necessary. It still does. But it did not stop the fall.

When you return home, your aunt is packing a small bag.

“Rural shelters are opening,” she says. “Cooler. Safer.”

You left one place because water rose. Now heat asks whether staying can mean more than endurance.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Stay and organise
political pressure. Go to
page 9



Stay and turn your song
into a public campaign.
Go to page 13

You text Rafi back before you can overthink it. "Coming."

The walk to the old market feels longer than usual. The heat presses down without wind or relief. Stray dogs lie flat against the pavement. Shops are half-shuttered. Even the traffic sounds tired. You meet Rafi near the old market, his old backpack full of sensors and tangled charging cables. The map on his screen glows red.

"Surface temperature hit sixty-four degrees," he says. You touch a railing and pull your hand back instantly. It burns.



An elderly vendor sits beside his cart, dizzy, with nowhere cooler to move. There are no trees on this stretch of road, no shade except the thin shadow of a leaning signboard.

"It's not just heat," Rafi says quietly. "It's design." You walk together, placing sensors along bus stops and concrete walls. Each reading confirms what your body already knows.

This neighbourhood holds heat. And keeps it.



CONTINUE



Cities often experience the urban heat island effect, where concrete, asphalt, and buildings absorb and retain heat. Areas with fewer trees and green spaces can be several degrees hotter than wealthier, shaded districts.

Research shows that low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to experience extreme surface temperatures and have less access to cooling infrastructure.

Heat does not distribute itself evenly.

It follows planning decisions.

Source:

EPA, "Reduce Heat Islands," <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/reduce-heat-islands>

Resources for the Future, "Urban Heat Islands 101," <https://www.rff.org/publications/explainers/urban-heat-islands-101/>

By late afternoon, your shirt is soaked through. The map glows red in places you walk every day. The numbers are clear.

Rafi closes the laptop slowly. "We could start small," he says. "Test cooling interventions here." It makes sense. The data shows where to begin.

But as you watch an elderly vendor sit under direct sun, you feel something sharper. If planning decisions created this heat, then planning decisions must undo it. You are holding evidence. The question is how to use it.



At home, your aunt says shelters outside the city are opening. "Another spike could be worse," she warns.

The red map still burns in your mind. Safety matters, but the evidence keeps pointing back to the streets that need redesigning what made this dangerous.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Stay and build practical cooling solutions. Go to page 11



Use the data to demand structural change. Go to page 9

You close the window, even though it barely makes a difference. The air inside the room feels heavy, unmoving. Sweat gathers at the back of your neck. Somewhere outside, a siren rises and fades.

Your notebook lies open on the desk. The page curls slightly in the heat. You sit on the floor and begin tapping a slow rhythm against your knee - steady, like breathing should be. Inhale.

Exhale.

Except the air doesn't feel steady. It feels strained.

You write a line without thinking:

"The sky forgot to move." Another follows: "The air forgot to breathe."



CONTINUE



Extreme heat places stress on the cardiovascular system, while high levels of air pollution irritate the lungs and reduce oxygen exchange. Combined exposure increases the risk of respiratory distress, particularly for children, the elderly, and people with asthma.

During prolonged heatwaves, hospital admissions for breathing-related illness rise sharply.

Heat is not only temperature. It is breath under pressure.

Source:

WHO, "Heat and health," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

European Environment Agency, "Combined effects of air pollution and heat exposure," <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/newsroom/editorial/combined-effects-of-air-pollution-and-heat-exposure>

The room is still heavy with heat, but the melody lingers in the air even after you stop singing. For a moment, it feels like breathing. You look at the lyrics on the page. The song feels honest. It feels real. But honesty inside a room does not move a city. You imagine it carried across rooftops, across metro platforms, through phones and speakers and crowded lanes. Music can travel where policy cannot. Still - another thought presses in.

If the city needs change, someone must stand in front of power and say it clearly. Your voice could be echo. Or it could be demand. The heat will not wait.

That night, your aunt speaks gently. "We can leave before the next surge," she says.

You look at your notebook. Music followed you across one border already. Now it asks whether it should stay quiet, or root itself here.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Stay and turn your voice
toward political action.
Go to page 9



Stay and grow the
movement through
music. Go to page 13

You decide anger needs structure. The next morning, you meet Tara and Rafi in a small community hall. Rafi projects the heat map onto the wall. Red zones spread across entire districts.

“We need demands,” Tara says. You write them down: cooling shelters, public heat alerts, emergency inhalers and clinic support for asthma patients on hazardous AQI days, transparent reporting.



Rafi had invited a doctor after seeing his hospital updates about heat cases. A man steps forward, hospital ID still around his neck. “Dr. Arvind Rao. Lok Nayak Hospital.” You recognise the name.



CONTINUE



Pulmonologists report that extreme heat combined with high particulate pollution increases inflammation in the lungs and reduces oxygen exchange efficiency. During severe heatwaves, respiratory admissions can rise sharply - particularly among children, the elderly, and outdoor workers.

Heat becomes dangerous long before collapse.

Source:

WHO, "Heat and health," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-heat-and-health>

Delhi Disaster Management Authority, "Delhi Heat Action Plan 2024-25," <https://ddma.delhi.gov.in/>

"We've seen a surge in respiratory admissions," he says calmly. "Children. Outdoor workers. This is not theoretical." He pauses. "But if hospitals are seen as aligning with protest, administrative support becomes difficult."

The room quiets. "So we stay quiet?" Tara asks. "No," he replies. "But strategy matters."

Two days later, nearly two hundred people gather outside City Hall. Media cameras appear. Inside, a councillor listens. "Budget reallocations take time." Outside, ambulances continue to pass.

That evening, headlines accuse you of politicising weather. Tara wants a mass march. Rafi, who trusts maps more than speeches, worries the movement will fracture. Dr. Rao sends a message: "Escalation may silence hospital partners." The heatwave is forecast to intensify next week. Pressure is building. You must decide how to push.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Negotiate strategically with medical backing and draft policy proposals. Go to page 17



Escalate publicly with a mass march. Go to page 15



You decide to start where the temperature spikes. Instead of City Hall, you return to the streets with Rafi and the heat map. The red zones overlap with bus stops, market lanes, and entire stretches without trees.

“If design created this,” Rafi says, “design can reduce it.”

You focus on small, fast changes: temporary shade cloth above a bus stop, reflective paint on tin rooftops, water refill stations at key corners, volunteers checking on elderly residents during peak hours. It is not dramatic. It is measurable.

CONTINUE

Within days, the bus stop temperature drops several degrees. An elderly vendor moves his cart beneath the new shade. “It helps,” he says simply. But the forecast warns that the next heat surge will be stronger.

Your network is small. Supplies are limited. The power grid is unstable. If you expand too quickly, the system may collapse. If you stay small, other districts remain exposed.

If you leave the city now, someone else will stand in this heat tomorrow. The heat is rising. You must decide how to respond.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

⇒ Expand the cooling network rapidly across multiple neighbourhoods. Go to page 19

⇒ Stabilise the current zone and focus on making it resilient before scaling. Go to page 21

You don't take the song to the street first. You take it upward. The rooftop of your building is crowded that evening - neighbours seeking breeze that never comes, teenagers scrolling through heat alerts, someone broadcasting a small youth gathering online.

Tara has invited people quietly. Rafi brings a portable speaker powered by a car battery. The school principal Meera Sharma arrives last, standing near the back, observing more than speaking.



"You don't have to shout to be heard," she tells you gently.

You begin to sing. The air feels thinner at night, but no cooler. The street musician Gulzar, you met earlier today, appears halfway through the second verse, guitar slung low, listening once before joining. The rhythm strengthens. Not louder - steadier. Phones rise. Someone streams it live.

CONTINUE

By morning, the clip circulates across student networks. A journalist contacts Tara: a climate-health summit is underway in the city. Youth voices are being invited to a side event. At the summit venue, banners speak of resilience and adaptation. You perform one verse - not the whole song.

After the session, Prime Minister Mia Mottley pauses briefly near the performers. She listens, then says quietly: "Your voice carries more than sound; it carries truth."

It is not a speech. It is not endorsement. But it feels like permission. The heat has taken many things from you. But not this.

The question is what you will do with it.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

⇒ Keep the movement rooted in community spaces, rooftop by rooftop. Go to page 19

⇒ Turn this visibility into coordinated political pressure. Go to page 15

You choose escalation.

The march is announced within forty-eight hours. The forecast predicts temperatures above fifty-three degrees. The risk is obvious. Tara insists that risk is the point.

By midday, thousands gather near India Gate. Masks soaked in water. Handwritten signs. Heat maps printed large enough to see from a distance. Dr. Rao stands near the back, not speaking, just present. When you take the microphone, the air feels thinner than before.

“This is not weather,” you say. “It is a decision.”

The crowd answers.

For a moment, it feels unstoppable.



CONTINUE

Then the heat presses harder.

Several people collapse in the crowd. Emergency vehicles struggle to move. News cameras capture the chaos as much as the message. By evening, headlines shift tone.

“Youth Protest Endangers Public During Extreme Heat.”

City officials condemn “irresponsible gathering during hazardous conditions.”

The temperature forecast updates again. Higher. The city stands at a threshold. If you push harder, you may lose public sympathy. If you retreat, momentum may dissolve. This is no longer about volume. It is about discipline. You must decide what escalation means.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



Continue escalating publicly, even if it means confrontation and possible crackdown. Go to page 23



Reframe the movement with medical leadership and coordinated heat-response demands, shifting from outrage to structured emergency action. Go to page 27

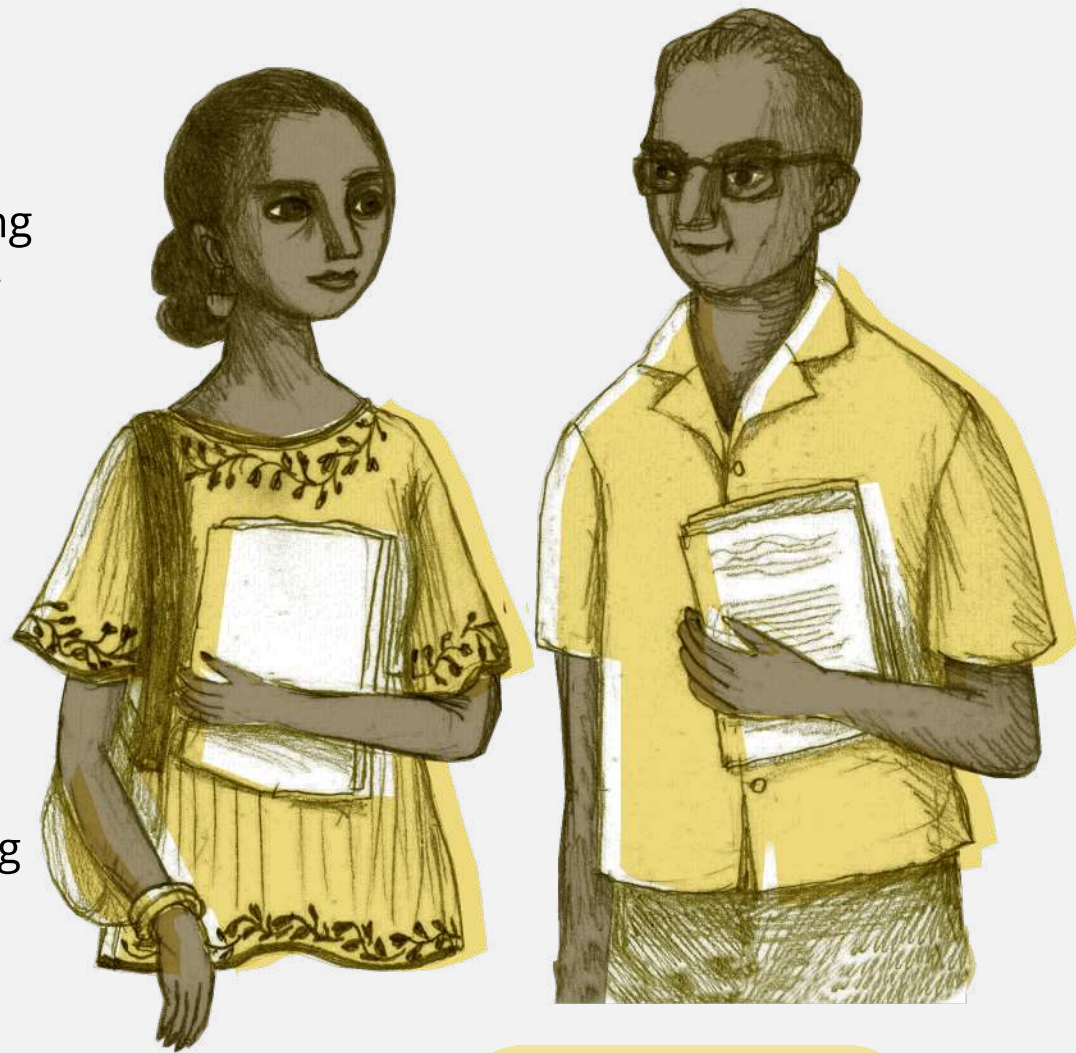
You choose restraint.

Instead of calling for a mass march, you return to City Hall with Dr. Rao and a draft of specific proposals: cooling shelters in the hottest wards, subsidised inhalers during hazardous AQI days, multilingual heat alerts.

No slogans. No cameras. Just data. The officials respond faster this time. Within days, two pilot cooling shelters open. Pharmacies in three districts receive emergency inhaler funding. A public statement announces “constructive youth collaboration.”

Tara studies the announcement carefully. “They’re calling this a pilot,” she says. “Pilots can be cancelled.”

Dr. Rao adjusts his glasses. “Pilots can also become policy.”



CONTINUE

The heat spike arrives three days later. Temperatures rise beyond forecast.

One shelter struggles. The other stabilises. Hospitals report strain - but not collapse.

City Hall requests a follow-up meeting.

They are willing to expand - cautiously. But expansion requires endorsement. Your endorsement.

If you stand beside them publicly, the program gains legitimacy. If you withdraw support, the fragile compromise may fracture.

This is the line between collaboration and confrontation. You must choose.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



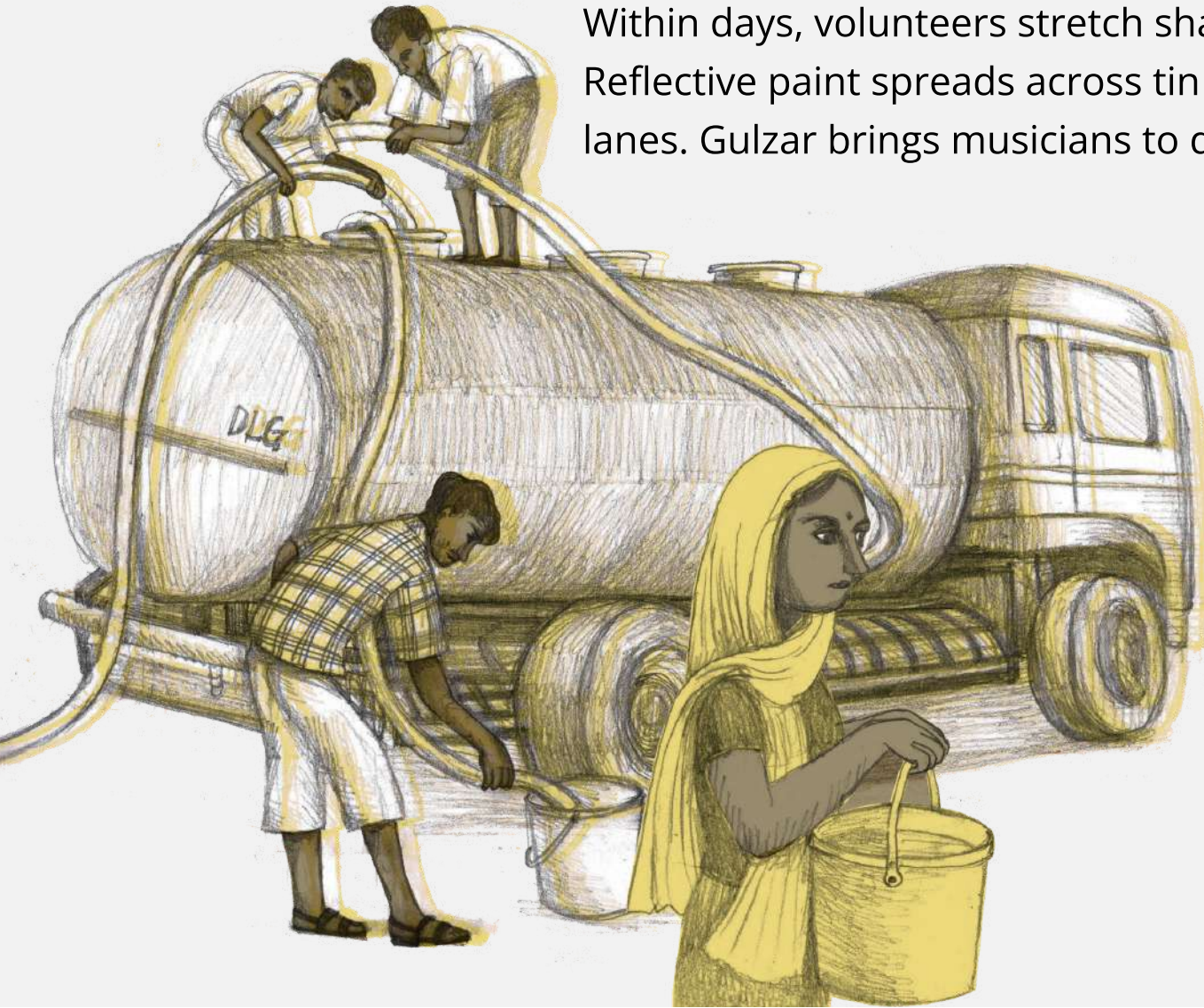
Accept the city's limited expansion plan and publicly support gradual reform. Go to page 25



Withdraw public support and declare the pilot insufficient under escalating heat. Go to page 23

You choose expansion.

Within days, volunteers stretch shade cloth across three more bus stops. Reflective paint spreads across tin rooftops. Water stations appear in market lanes. Gulzar brings musicians to draw attention to each new cooling zone.



The network grows faster than you expected. So does the heat. Temperatures spike above forecast. One neighbourhood loses power for hours. Volunteers rotate without rest. Supplies run low. Social media celebrates the “youth cooling revolution.”

But celebration does not reduce surface temperature.

CONTINUE

Rafi studies the readings. Some zones stabilise. Others begin to fail. "This scale is fragile," he says quietly. "We moved faster than infrastructure."

The next surge is coming tomorrow. If the system collapses publicly, confidence disappears. If you narrow focus now, some districts will remain exposed. Expansion has created momentum. But momentum in extreme heat can burn out.

You must decide.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

⇒ Consolidate the strongest zones and accept limited reach for now. Go to page 25

⇒ Push forward and expand further, refusing to slow down. Go to page 23

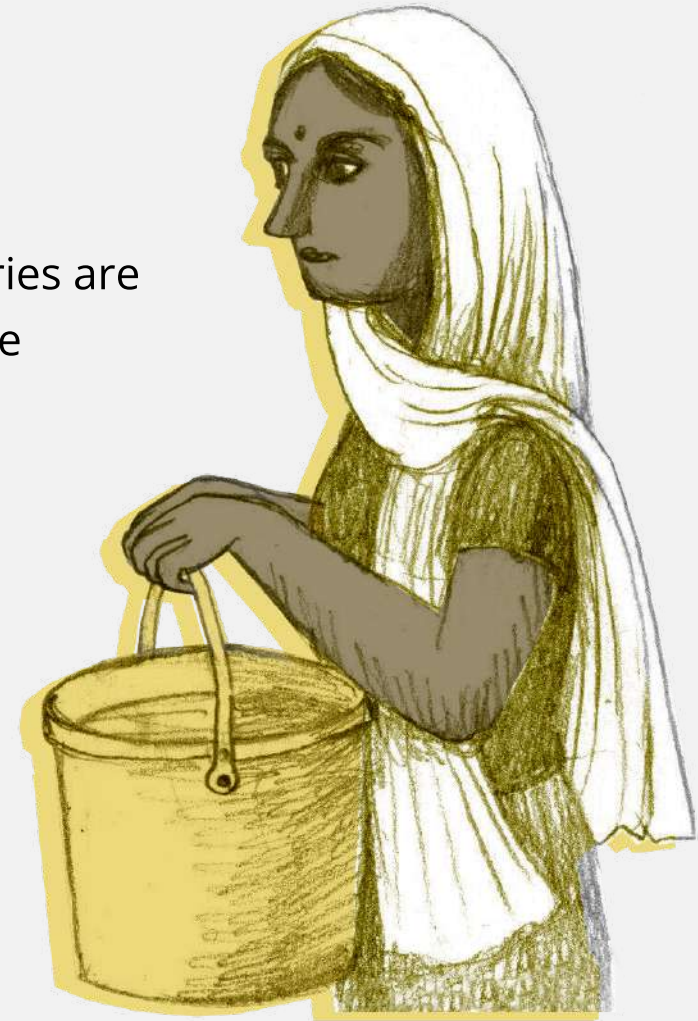
You choose restraint. Instead of spreading thinner, you focus on one neighbourhood - the hottest zone on Rafi's map.

Shade cloth is reinforced. Volunteers are scheduled in shifts. Water deliveries are coordinated with shopkeepers. A small backup generator is secured for the cooling hub.

It is not dramatic. It is steady.

The temperature spikes as predicted. The streets shimmer. The air feels heavier than ever. But in this one pocket of the city, the system holds.

The bus stop remains shaded. The water station stays stocked. Elderly residents are checked on twice a day. Other districts call for help. You cannot answer all of them. News outlets highlight your neighbourhood as a model. City officials quietly observe.

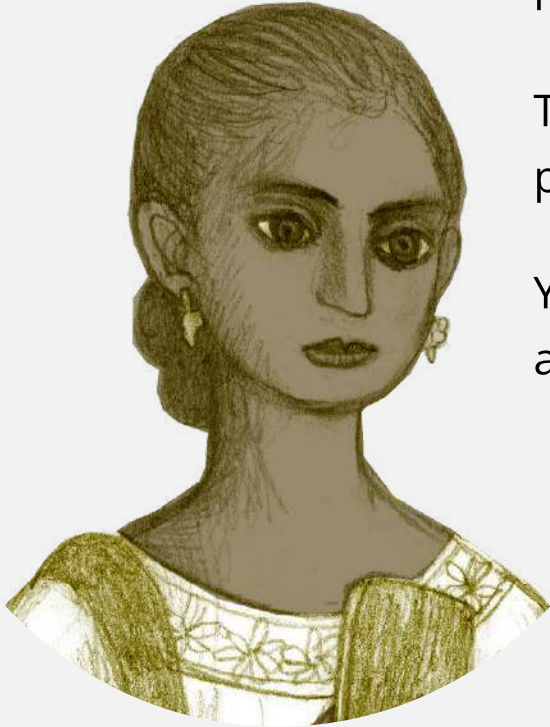


CONTINUE

Rafi studies the numbers. "We reduced hospital transports here," he says. "But only here."

The heat does not respect boundaries. Stability in one place means absence in another.

You must decide what kind of success you are willing to accept.



WHAT DO YOU DO?



Abandon the contained model and attempt to expand under pressure.
Go to page 23



Keep the focus local and protect what works, even if other areas remain exposed. Go to page 25



The next heat surge arrives without drama.

No announcement. No headline large enough to prepare anyone.



The systems you tried to build begin to strain. Volunteers grow exhausted. Coordination falters. Public attention shifts elsewhere. Officials retreat into procedure.

Momentum thins. The heat remains.

Hospitals fill again. Power cuts return. Neighbourhoods improvise survival one day at a time.

CONTINUE

At home, your aunt places the small packed bag by the door again.

“This is not defeat,” she says quietly. “It is survival.”

This time, you do not argue. You leave the city before the next surge peaks.

The train moves slowly past streets where you once stood with a microphone, a banner, or a roll of shade cloth in your hands.

Your voice is still yours. But the air is unchanged. You understand now that urgency alone is not enough. That action without endurance fractures under pressure.

The sun rises the next morning over the rural horizon. It still descends like a warning.

THE END

The heat spike arrives as predicted. Temperatures rise beyond comfort, beyond habit, beyond what the city once considered possible.

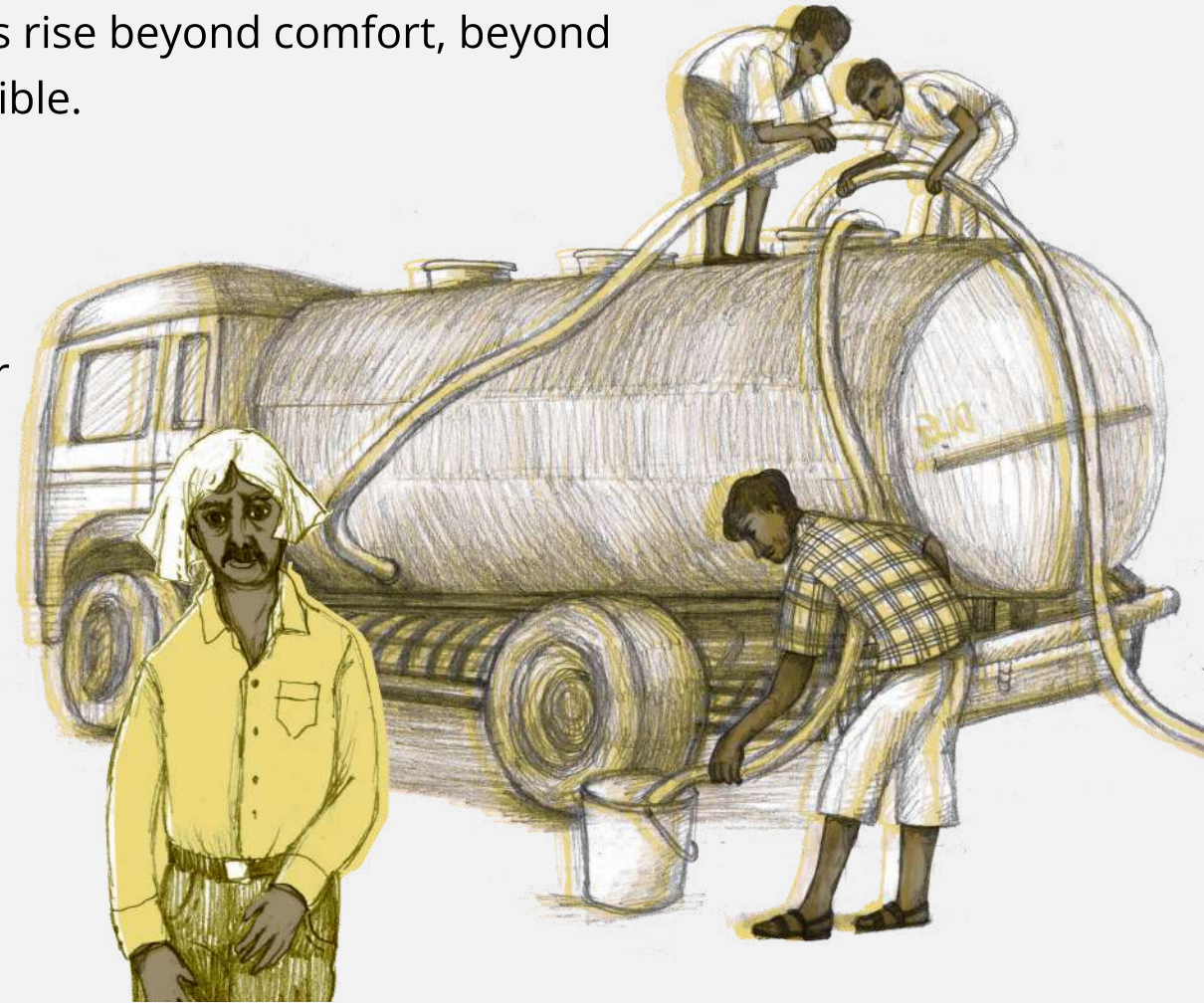
But this time, something holds.

The cooling shelters remain open. Volunteers rotate in shifts. Water stations stay stocked longer than expected. Hospital admissions still rise - but not as sharply.

In one ward, elderly residents sit beneath reinforced shade cloth instead of collapsing in direct sun.

It is not a revolution. It is a buffer.

City officials announce cautious expansion of the program. Funding is approved for additional pilot zones. Reports describe “incremental adaptation.”



CONTINUE

Tara is not fully satisfied. Rafi is quietly relieved.

Dr. Rao notes that respiratory cases have stabilised in some districts. At home, your aunt unpacks the emergency bag. "We stay," she says simply.

The city has not been transformed. Tree canopies are still sparse. Air quality still fluctuates. Power grids remain fragile. But there are pockets of preparedness now - small systems that did not exist before.

You walk past the shaded bus stop one evening and hear Gulzar playing softly nearby. The melody is familiar, but steadier.

Your voice did not change the sky. But it helped change the ground.

Heat will return next season. When it does, the city will not be entirely unprepared.

Sometimes resilience is not victory. It is persistence.

THE END



You choose discipline.

Instead of escalating blindly, you reorganise. Dr. Rao presents hospital data publicly. Rafi releases updated heat maps. Volunteers manage gatherings safely. The message shifts from outrage to emergency.

“This is public health,” Dr. Rao says.

When the next heat spike arrives, the city is not caught off guard.

Cooling shelters open before temperatures peak. Heat alerts are issued early. Medical teams deploy to the most vulnerable wards.

The surge is still severe. But the system holds.

CONTINUE

An emergency ordinance passes:

- Permanent cooling corridors
- Funded shelter expansion
- Mandatory heat-health protocols
- Public AQI transparency
- A youth advisory council

It is not perfection. It is coordination.

At a climate-health session, Mia Mottley pauses near you. “Your voice carried truth,” she says. “But you turned it into structure.” At home, your aunt unpacks the emergency bag. “We stay.”

The heat will return. But the city will meet it differently. And so will you.

THE END

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1

5

2

3

4

Next



Can local action succeed without systemic change?

Cooling shelters, shade cloth, and volunteer networks reduced harm.

But they did not lower global temperatures.

Political reform improved coordination. But it did not eliminate risk.

Reflect on the limits of local adaptation:

What can communities control?

What requires government leadership?

What depends on global climate policy?

Where do you see the boundary between resilience and justice?



What kind of risk were you willing to accept - and for whom?

Some paths required public confrontation. Others demanded compromise.

Some protected one neighbourhood while leaving others exposed.

Which risks felt justified to you?

Were you more comfortable risking political backlash, physical danger, or slow progress?

Climate decisions are rarely risk-free.

Reflect on whose safety your choices centred - your family's, your community's, or the wider city's.

What does that reveal about how you weigh responsibility?



Which ending did you reach – and why did that path feel right to you?

Think back to the moments when you had to choose:

- Did you prioritise speed or stability?
- Visibility or coordination?
- Survival or resistance?

Were you drawn toward immediate protection, gradual reform, or structural change?

Notice whether fear, urgency, loyalty, or hope shaped your decisions.

This question is not about whether you reached the “best” ending - but about understanding how small strategic choices accumulate into long-term outcomes.

In real climate crises, turning points often look minor in the moment.



When does survival become migration - and when does staying become resistance?

Anya's family faces a recurring dilemma: leave for safety or remain in a city that may not protect them.

For climate migrants, this choice is not symbolic. It is physical.

What would you have done in their position?

Does staying to fight for change require privilege - or courage - or both?

How should cities support those forced to move by heat, floods, or air pollution?

Climate displacement is not a future possibility. It is already happening.



What does climate leadership look like in your own life?

In the story, leadership took different forms:

- Medical evidence
- Organised protest
- Community engineering
- Cultural expression

Which form felt most powerful to you?

Do you see yourself more in Anya, Tara, Rafi, Dr. Rao, or even the cautious official?

Climate crises demand more than one type of leader.

What role could you realistically play - not in theory, but in practice?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Next



IPCC – Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), Working Groups I & II (2021–2022)

<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

WHO – Heat and Health Guidance (2021 update)

<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289062930>

World Bank – Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and Urban Resilience Reports (2011)

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/669421468188348522/pdf/68358-v2-disaster-risk-urban-poor-final-Box393223B-PUBLIC.pdf>

UNEP – Emissions Gap Report (2025)

<https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2025>

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change (2025)

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01919-1/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01919-1/abstract)



This adventure book is a creation of Erasmus+ Green Saga Project

Funded by the European Union. However, the views or opinions expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the European Union or the Agency of Youth Affairs. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Project code: 2024-2-LT02-KA220-YOU-000293123



**Co-funded by
the European Union**