



## Code Blue

**Marissa Slaven**

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*Code Blue is a thoughtful and satisfying young adult novel set in a world where climate change has altered much.*

Marissa Slaven's bold, ambitious young adult novel *Code Blue* tackles climate change in the politically divided United States.

In the not-so-distant future, the Change devastated parts of the United States, putting much of its coastline underwater. People live in fear of the next natural disaster. Scientists attempt to halt and reverse climate change, but fringe groups of antienvironmental terrorists threaten to undo all of their hard-won progress.

To encourage the flow of new ideas for combating the Change, the North East Science Academy, or NESAs, trains high schoolers with exceptional scientific promise. Tic is one such student. She moves to NESAs intending to follow in her late father's footsteps. She becomes fast friends with Lee, her romantic interest, and Phish, a genius hacktivist. Together, they investigate the mystery surrounding Tic's father's accidental death. When a hurricane threatens her hometown and family, Tic is forced to confront her family's past and their uncomfortable ties to Lee's family.

Tic narrates; she is also the moral center around whom the other characters revolve. She at first seems to be shy and introverted, revealing that she was raised by a single mother who scraped by to provide for her ambitious daughter. As Tic's friendships with Lee and Phish deepen, though, her confidence grows—as does the personal conflict concerning her parents' secrets. While battling adversity and conflict, Tic matures into young adulthood. And Lee and Phish aid in her development: Phish grounds Tic with his stability, while Lee's wealth, religious background, and immaturity are a foil for Tic's calm. His all-consuming jealousy over Tic's relationships with other students and his complicated family background result in both humor and conflict.

With a calm beginning, the novel picks up in suspense and action midway through, as the mystery surrounding Tic's father's death comes into sharper focus. The first half of the book establishes Tic's personal relationships; the second develops the increasing tension between Tic and Lee, between Tic and her personal responsibility to her family, and between Tic and her pursuit of the truth. This is a natural progression, and the book's ending still comes as a pleasant and expected surprise. Further, climate change is addressed throughout in a deft manner, while the clever use of political subtexts involving religious fanatics and terrorist organizations ground the story in the moment.

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NANCY POWELL (June 10, 2021)

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