



## The Book of Flora

*Meg Elison*

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## **The Book of Flora** Meg Elison

Meg Elison: "I am writing the third and final Road to Nowhere novel now, with my title being The Book of Flora. Readers of Etta will know what character I'm handing the torch to, and I hope they're as excited to follow her as I am."

## **The Book of Flora Details**

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Meg Elison

Format :

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Dystopia



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## From Reader Review The Book of Flora for online ebook

### Siobhán says

\*I received an ARC via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. Thanks for the free book and sorry that it took me so long: I had to read the first two books first. They had lived on my tbr pile for ages...\*

In this third instalment of The Road To Nowhere series, the narration focuses on Flora, whom we already know from The Book Of Etta as a trans female (I didn't particularly like in #2). I grew to like her in this book though.

The future is queer and gender issues are the main theme of the book. In a world where women are scarce and babies even more scarce, where is the place for lesbians, for trans or intersex people? Are you a woman if you cannot have children? These questions do not need a post apocalyptic setting to be discussed: if a woman refuses to have children, she is told that she wasn't a 'real' woman. Trans women have to fight for their rights, because feminism should embrace all females.

Anyway, back to the book. It was very interesting to see how language, science and knowledge deteriorate in this dystopia. Where will humanity go? What different forms of 'society' (on a smaller and larger scale) are formed? I'm all in for thought experiments.

I disliked the part about magic and evolution. Yes, fanatics are everywhere, but seriously? Just too much for me. How can people be so dumb? Okay, maybe it's the lack of science, education and logical thinking, but I just couldn't deal with it. Maybe that makes it the more realistic. Yet, I know that people get the more superstitious the less science and factual knowledge exists. So maybe it's just my rationality going on strike and refusing to like that part.

Well written again, highly immersive, interesting and I enjoyed reading it.

Here is my favourite quote from the book:

"It's no great crime to live as a man. Men are plentiful and everyone understands why you do it. Women lying with women is a waste, but you'll hardly get killed for it. Living as a woman without being one is the thing that always stirs hate and violence. As if there is some great deception in it. As if it is the worst kind of fraud. Yet a woman who cannot breed or will not try is never the same sort of problem. And women past the end of their blood are no thread. I am no different from them."

3,5-4 stars because I didn't get Connie, I thought that the ending escalated far too much and I had wanted some sort of closure. Not sure why I'm not happy with the closure I got, but I'm not happy.

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### Rachel Stansel says

The satisfying conclusion to the trilogy, it is important to read them in order. As always, I was pulled in through the beautiful writing to a world of people trying to survive in this new world. Dark. Powerful. Interesting and intense.

Full disclosure- I received a copy of the book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Cahleen Hudson says**

This doesn't compare to the genius of the first book. How could it? The first book, *The Book of the Unnamed Midwife*, is full of plague, the crash of civilization as we know it, and then the subsequent world building as what's left of humanity finds their way forward—those are the goods that draw me to the dystopian genre. Still, the next two books, *The Book of Etta* and this one, are interesting. As someone else mentioned (in a review that I read somewhere), the author uses the backdrop of this new, gender imbalanced world to explore issues of gender, sexuality, and power. I liked putting a magnifying glass on all these things in the wildly different and creative contexts of all the new settlements that pop up all over the place. It was fascinating to imagine how completely different and insulated groups of people would choose to address these things and start to rebuild civilization. Some of these scenarios seemed more plausible than others, but all of them were interesting in an anthropological way. The ending was a bit abrupt, but still satisfying.

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### **Cathy (cathepsut) says**

RTC in April 2019.

I received this free e-copy from 47North via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review, thank you!

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### **Alina says**

*\*\*\*Note: I received a copy courtesy of Netgalley and 47North in exchange for an honest review.*

Review to come

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### **Ana says**

**\*in which she fangirls\***

This was insanely good!

I was already a huge fan of Meg Elison's first two books in this phenomenal "Road to Nowhere" series and having my request for an early reader's copy approved made me so happy. Not that this is a happy-go-lucky kind of series, I wouldn't want it to be: it's dark and sometimes darn brutal, but the characters she created feel so real in their struggle for a kind of "normalcy," for self-acceptance, even, and self-love, and so hopelessly raw in the way they reach for and take care of each other.

What I loved about these interconnected books was their underlying sense of balance as to who the villain is in whose story: "Are you just taking your own petty pain and spreading it around, rather than finding a way to love and be loved? You really have become a man." one of the characters asks at some point. It's

something that, to me, other more “hyped” books in this new canon of feminist dystopian/post-apocalyptic narratives had missed the mark on. I was blown away by these women’s stories and I won’t forget them any time soon. It’s not an easy read, you won’t always like or understand these characters’ decisions, but it’s thought-provoking and challenges your own views on the “nature” of things.

“This is the work that women do. We keep the fire of civilization burning, by collecting and protecting stories. It’s what we’ve always done.”

The entire “Alexandria” episode left me speechless. It felt like a gift from the writer to her characters and readers alike. That moment was beyond beautiful!

Because I flew through the first two books, without taking notes to be able to comment on all those character parallels, I plan on re-reading them at the beginning of 2019 to be able to catch on all those striking nuances in this new found gender & identity dynamic. Needless to say, this third book made me appreciate *The Book of Etta* even more and placed “Road to Nowhere” in my all-time favourite series list.

I will read anything Meg Elison writes in the future!

\*Thanks to NetGalley, 47North & Amazon Publishing for the opportunity to read a digital ARC in exchange for an honest review. *The Book of Flora* RELEASES APRIL 23, 2019.\*

On December 7, 2018:

#### **A new favourite author?**

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#### **Erika says**

--I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All thoughts are purely my own and not influenced in any way.--

I've been following the Road to Nowhere series since it began, so I'm kinda sad to see it end! This final part is very different and not as explosive as the first two, but then, Flora is not really fighting for survival like the midwife or fighting a slave trader like Eddy, so it's fitting.

Flora is a really interesting character and I actually wish we got more of the backstory from her life! Eddy I liked in the book of Etta, but here he's not the most likeable, and it's really neat to see them in someone else's perspective. The book as a whole felt a little more aimless: there's not as much world building as the first two and so much of it takes place on a boat going pretty much nowhere and meeting very few new people and seeing very few new civilizations (which was my favorite part of the first two). Then there's Connie: they REALLY needed to introduce them earlier in the book so we could see them develop as a character to what they turn out to be because there was almost no purpose to their being there until almost the end. I would've liked to see more of them and see more interactions between them and Flora.

Is this a satisfying end? Eh, it kind of just stopped, but I can see some of the finality. I really like that this picked up where Book of Etta left off, but I'm not sure if Flora was necessarily the right person to end the series with.

Overall, it's good, but it's just very different with some odd pacing and characterization that comes seemingly out of nowhere. I look forward to her other works!

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### **Annelise says**

I was very much looking forward to reading the third instalment of the Road To Nowhere trilogy, and thanks to NetGalley I got to do it even earlier than I'd hoped.

The Book of Flora continues the tale first started in The Book of the Unnamed Midwife, and links directly to events from The Book of Etta. Fair warning to those new to the series, I'm not sure I'd have enjoyed this book as much as I did had I not actually read the two preceding novels.

Though the Road to Nowhere series is set in a very grim dystopia, The Book of Flora felt less dark to me. Flora, the protagonist and narrator's journey is the main focus, and we follow her exploration of the world, her place in it and how it relates to her. I loved learning more about Flora, she was such an interesting character in the previous novel. I just wish (as always) life wasn't so hard for her. Elison and her world can be very rough on her characters. I did feel the end was a little rushed, and I really wanted to delve into both the happier, more peaceful times implied in Flora's retrospective narrative passages, as well as the revelatory change discovered at the very end.

I find the Road To Nowhere novels quick reads, but not because they are easy. On the contrary they are set in a grimdark world full of terror and violence which strike me as uncomfortably plausible. Even so, the first novel, The Book of the Unnamed Midwife, remains my favourite of the trilogy, and one of my all-time favourite novels.

Anyone who has enjoyed any of the other novels in the series should definitely read The Book of Flora, and those who haven't should give them a try! Meg Elison's writing is compelling, flows well, and her ideas are as fascinating as always.

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### **Jypsy says**

I enjoyed the first two books in the series more. The Book of Flora fell flat for me. I was expecting more. While the story is engaging and the characters are likeable, I just couldn't find a connection.

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### **Jacqie says**

Thanks to Netgalley for providing a copy of this book for review.

The last book in the Road to Nowhere trilogy (although no one lives in Nowhere in this book) is written by Flora, a "horsewoman" who met and fell in love with Eddy in the Book of Etta. Flora is a transwoman. Horsewomen come by this name because they concentrate and use essence of mare urine topically in order to change their hormone levels and make their skins smoother and more womanly. Now, I know that this has indeed been done in the past, but I have a hard time believing that horse estrogen ointment is going to change someone so significantly that they will appear female to the casual viewer. Of course, Flora also dresses female and takes pains to modulate her voice, but Eddy, who is gender fluid himself and is familiar with passing, had no clue that Flora wasn't biologically female until they had a frank conversation/groping session

in a cave in the previous book. Even though Eddy himself has had to conceal his gender identity, he got pretty pissed at poor Flora and doesn't treat her especially well in either book.

I had some issues with the book myself. Flora was raised by a slaver and essentially helped to train other young children like herself to sexually service adults and then be sold on. Hence, Flora has a very different attitude to slavers than Eddy does. While Eddy is very black and white on morality, Flora has a more nuanced attitude toward people doing what they need to do to survive. While moral relativism does have a place in the world, and Flora obviously grew up damaged because of how she was trained, once again the author has a damaged character who is differently gendered- is it because this is who they always were or is it because they have been damaged? The two-for-two on sexual abuse = gender fluidity/transgender doesn't sit well with me.

This is another travelogue book. Eddy is searching for the men who trained him as a raider. Nowhere has been destroyed, and the characters in this book (Eddy, Alice his sometime lover, and Flora) don't want to start over.

Flora visits Chicago on her own, and learns the mythology the city has created for itself. It is entirely female (genderwise, not biologically) except for child slaves. Flora makes the astute observation that wherever there is luxury, there is slavery supporting it. That's as much true in this world as in a post-apocalyptic one, to my intense discomfort.

The group ends up traveling up and down the east coast, ends up on a boat in Florida and eventually travels all the way to the coast of the Pacific Northwest (former Washington state). This is a lot of ground to cover (literally) and I wasn't as engaged by the story because there wasn't as much of a focused purpose to it. Once again, the group encounters other odd and unique societies. Flora ends up buying a genderfluid child from a slave auction and decides that she will then mother this teenager. Flora clearly wants a family badly, but she never asks this child if they want to be part of her family (there are a lot of consent issues in this book) and the child ends up going very, very bad.

This book uses a flashback mechanism. At the beginning, Flora, as a sixty-something year old elder in her community, is writing in her book and preparing the community archives to survive an overwhelming attack from an invading force. Her current preparations are interspersed with her past travels. To the author's credit, I didn't figure out exactly what was happening until shortly before it did.

I did have an issue with the antagonist in the book. I've spoiler-warninged this already, so I'll go ahead and discuss it. The commander of the invading army ends up being Flora's estranged child. They have this idea that women can learn to be able to procreate without men being involved (parthenogenesis) and it turns out that they are right! Magic, for lack of a better term, has made some human women able to do this. So, this person decides that they need to kill all women who CAN'T do this to make room for those who can! Very disturbing and insane. The whole magical virgin birth thing seemed like a bit of a bridge too far from the previous things that have been possible in this series. The whole final confrontation came about because Connie, Flora's adoptee, is still fixated on Alice, who was part of the group that rescued them. Connie had a crush on Alice as a teenager and apparently hadn't gotten over it in the past twenty-plus years? The whole end felt contrived and the beats of the finale felt predictable.

I never connected to Flora the way that I did to Eddy or the Unnamed Midwife. I didn't find her as likable, although she did have some interesting insights. She also had some weaknesses and blind spots that I didn't care for. The travelogue felt less purposeful this time. The best part- Eddy, twenty plus years later, still does not give a fuck what anyone wants to do to him- he just wants to get through the bullshit. He also ends up in

the place that I would personally want to end up in this world: a battleship that has been converted into a floating archive and protected place for women who want to be librarians for the archive, off the coast of California. Sounds good to me! Put me in a giant library/fortress that can't be overrun and let me read and record.

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### **Tudor Vlad says**

I like the title and what it implies. I hope that Etta will still be just as present though.

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### **Bandit says**

Being a completist isn't really all that great when it comes to books. Mostly it gets you stuck reading books all the way through that you might have abandoned otherwise. And yes, it is the completist in me that requested this book on Netgalley and set off reading it, just to see how it all turns out in Ellison's womencentric dystopia. Small mercies, this was the last in a trilogy, trilogies are infinitely more manageable than series, although not as great as standalones. Book 1 was pretty good and totally worked as a standalone, before the author decided to expand her fictional universe. Book 2 was inferior, decent enough, but not on the same level and apparently utterly unmemorable, because I was unable to recall any of its plot. Thought reading book 3 would jog the memory, but no...nothing. And as a standalone book 3 really doesn't work, you have to have at least a passing familiarity with this world and its complex gender roles and breeding practices, which I did but from book 1. So ok, if you've read the trilogy, you know about this strange world where many died, population ratios are way out of balance and women are now in charge and they live in small communities located in the ashes of civilization and govern themselves by varied rules. The book splits its time about evenly between the various reproduction scenarios and superbly complex gender politics. The protagonist and narrator of this one is on something of a personal odyssey to find a place that's right for her and the book covers her journey, found destination and looks into the future to offer readers an idea of what's next...and what's next is apparently a form of agamogenesis. Sort of appropriate, I suppose, to end that way a trilogy so heavily concentrated on procreation. It's interesting enough of a concept and would probably ideally be read pretty close together to maintain a working familiarity with characters and plot intricacies. I wouldn't have continued with this, if Ellison decided to serialize it, but trilogy offered an appealing closure and it was quick enough of a read. Nowhere was there page count available (so frustrating), but if I had to guess, it's somewhere in the 275 to 300 page range. What's the deal with trilogies anyway? Are the readers meant to remember the plots for a year or so and then get right back into it? Reread the books before the new one comes out? Seems more practical to just wait for all three to be out. At least if the first book has the decency to announce itself as book 1. Anyway, this was entertaining enough, I found out how it played out, the ending was fairly satisfactory. Not sure it was necessary to expand the original book into a trilogy, but there it is. Ellison is a good writer and it would be interesting to see what she comes up with next now that she's free of the Nowhere world. Thanks Netgalley.

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### **Bryn Clark says**

As soon as I received this ARC from Netgalley, (so thank you so much for letting me read this for an honest review, NG, you guys are doing the goddess' work) I immediately read the first two books for context on Kindle Unlimited and then dove into this one. That was 3 books in four days, I'm wiped.

The first book was breathtaking and I loved it but Etta was too hardened for me and Flora was too ambivalent. I wanted to adore these last two books so much, but they both left me wanting.

The Book of Flora gets 3 stars from me. I love the new names for the places we all know so well, although, I will admit, it took another reviewer for me to realize Shy was Chicago and not Cheyenne. Flora picks up the torch of the midwife in this one and I'm a liberal Californian, same as the author, so I found the gender lectures a little "preaching to the choir" for me as I am already well-versed in trans etiquette, so it became noisy for me listening to her drone on about it, we get it, girl, you're progressive af, power to the queers, now tell your dang story.

The plot felt as meandering as Flora's journey. I felt the sex in this one was thrown in as fan service and I'm sorry, but I'm not as obsessed with Alice as the author is, she's ridiculously self-absorbed and letting her steal the ending from the title character was the worst moment in the whole book. It should've just been called The Book of Alice.

Flora is a beautiful woman who deserved better than Eddy and Alice, in my opinion. She has such a big heart and her instincts went too long unheeded by Etta, the bully. I feel like the Big Bad in this book made not a lot of sense, so the ending threw me off guard, I saw it coming but I wonder now if the author is a mother and all that that entails. It's a good end but I'm glad it's over.

May the Alexandria always be seaworthy and the libraries as pristine as the one in Demons.

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**Sh3lly ([grumpybookgrrrl.com](http://grumpybookgrrrl.com)) says**

Got approved at Netgalley. \*BRB dying"

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