

The Girl in the Road: A Novel

By Monica Byrne



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A debut that Neil Gaiman calls “Glorious. . . . So sharp, so focused and so human.” *The Girl in the Road* describes a future that is culturally lush and emotionally wrenching.

Monica Byrne bursts on to the literary scene with an extraordinary vision of the future. In a world where global power has shifted east and revolution is brewing, two women embark on vastly different journeys—each harrowing and urgent and wholly unexpected.

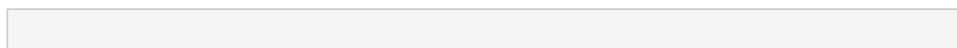
When Meena finds snakebites on her chest, her worst fears are realized: someone is after her and she must flee India. As she plots her exit, she learns of the Trail, an energy-harvesting bridge spanning the Arabian Sea that has become a refuge for itinerant vagabonds and loners on the run. This is her salvation. Slipping out in the cover of night, with a knapsack full of supplies including a pozit GPS, a scroll reader, and a sealable waterproof pod, she sets off for Ethiopia, the place of her birth.

Meanwhile, Mariama, a young girl in Africa, is forced to flee her home. She joins up with a caravan of misfits heading across the Sahara. She is taken in by Yemaya, a beautiful and enigmatic woman who becomes her protector and confidante. They are trying to reach Addis Abba, Ethiopia, a metropolis swirling with radical politics and rich culture. But Mariama will find a city far different than she ever expected—romantic, turbulent, and dangerous.

As one heads east and the other west, Meena and Mariama’s fates are linked in ways that are mysterious and shocking to the core.

Written with stunning clarity, deep emotion, and a futuristic flair, *The Girl in the Road* is an artistic feat of the first order: vividly imagined, artfully told, and profoundly moving.

From the Hardcover edition.



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Editorial Review

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Byrne's stunning debut tells the story of two women from different time periods who set out on quests across forbidding landscapes. In India in the latter half of the twenty-first century, Meena survives what she believes is an assassination attempt after discovering a snake in her bed. Fleeing this threat to her life, she decides to track down the woman responsible for the death of her parents more than a quarter-of-a-century ago in Ethiopia. Meena knows her journey won't be an easy one. She intends to travel along the Trail, a bridge used to harness energy that runs across the Arabian Sea. Years before Meena sets out on her journey, ten-year-old Mariama smuggles herself aboard a truck bound for Ethiopia. The drivers take pity on her and allow her to accompany them, but it is Yemaya, a mysterious, beautiful passenger they pick up along the way, who captures Mariama's attention and heart. More than a few surprises await Meena and Mariama and the reader as story lines converge in a surprising, gratifying climax. --Kristine Huntley

Review

"Sci-fi has long claimed to be the multicultural literature of the future. This is the real thing. . . . Described with verve and conviction. . . . A new sensation, a real achievement." —*Wall Street Journal*

"Dizzying. . . . Primal and indelible. . . . Delivered with all the vivid, haunting poignancy of a vision quest." —*NPR.org*

"Vividly imagined." —*Los Angeles Times*

"[A] sci-fi smash hit. . . . Byrne crafts a gorgeous future world. . . . Elaborate and beguiling." —*Duke Chronicle*

"It's transfixing to watch Monica Byrne become a major player in sci-fi with her debut novel: so sharp, so focused and so human. Beautifully drawn people in a future that feels so close you can touch it, blended with the lush language and concerns of myth. It builds a bridge from past to future, from East to West. Glorious stuff." —Neil Gaiman, author of *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*

"Relentlessly kinetic. . . . [The narrative] captures the sheer surface speed and exhilaration of living in the changing contemporary world. . . . A ceaseless storm of matter and energy." —*Los Angeles Review of Books*

"*The Girl in the Road* brims with ambition...Inventive... Fearless ...[A] wild, hallucinatory ride." —*San Francisco Chronicle*

"In unadorned, clearly descriptive prose, Byrne moves briskly from scene to scene. . . . A deeply felt, troubling and memorable story." —*Indy Week (Durham, NC)*

"Engrossing, thought-provoking. . . . [Byrne] weaves the elements of science fiction and speculative fiction with myth, spirituality and philosophical speculation, all while creating a page-turning story. *The Girl in the Road* is meant to be enjoyed, pondered, and re-read." —*Durham Herald-Sun*

"Impressive. . . . The one thing no reader will doubt is Byrne's place as a strong new voice in science fiction." —*Shelf Awareness*

“This science fiction tale of future Africa and Asia has all the escape you could want — new technology, a murder mystery, two interwoven narratives — plus the cultural commentary inherent in the best of speculative fiction. Byrne’s characters are complicated, a little lost, and well worth rooting for. With a debut like this, you’ll want to keep an eye on her.” —*Brooklyn Daily*

“Byrne, whose creative life is clearly churning, has earned broad exposure for her debut novel, and with support from mentors such as author Neil Gaiman, she’s on her own journey – as a writer, defying literary convention and shaping worlds out of uncomfortable truths.” —*Raleigh News & Observer*

“Gripping. . . . Easily one of my favorite books I’ve read this year.” —*Bookish.com*

“Stunning. . . . More than a few surprises await Meena and Mariama and the reader as story lines converge in a surprising, gratifying climax.” —*Booklist*

“Spectacular and intriguing. . . . Enthralling on many levels. . . . The incorporation of evolving views of gender . . . propel this novel into the stratosphere of artistic brilliance.” —*Library Journal (starred)*

“The most inventive tale to come along in years. . . . The writing is often brilliant, as Byrne paints wholly believable pictures of worlds and cultures most Westerners will never know. . . . Engrossing and enjoyable.” —*Kirkus*

“Byrne is a science writer and graduate of MIT, but her insight into our near future is as much informed by her extensive travels as her grasp of science. . . . A book you will certainly be hearing a lot about in 2014.” —*Guardian (UK)*

“Monica Byrne’s vision of India and Africa as an ever-changing maelstrom of language and culture, technology and sexuality is utterly captivating. As Meena and Mariama chase each other’s echoes, Byrne strips away their preconceptions (and ours as well) through that most dangerous of human impulses: our need to understand the past, and to decide our own future. An electrifying debut.” —**Helene Wecker, author of *The Golem and the Jinni***

“Monica Byrne has written the road trip novel you didn’t know you were waiting for. A genuine and extraordinary journey. Take it.” —**John Scalzi, author of *Redshirts***

“*The Girl in the Road* is a brilliant novel, vivid, intense, and fearless with a kind of savage joy. These journeys—Meena’s across the Arabian Sea and Mariama’s across Africa—are utterly unforgettable.” —**Kim Stanley Robinson, author of *2312* and *Red Mars***

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

MONICA BYRNE studied at Wellesley College and MIT. She’s a writer and playwright based in Durham, North Carolina.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathleen Elder:

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