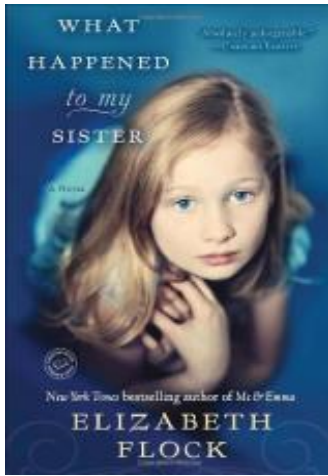


# What Happened to My Sister

by Elizabeth Flock

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## About the Book

**From the author of ME & EMMA comes a dazzling novel of two unforgettable families bound together by their deepest secrets and haunted pasts --- perfect for fans of THE SECRET LIFE OF CEECEE WILKES and THE BOOK OF BRIGHT IDEAS.**

Nine-year-old Carrie Parker and her mother, Libby, are making a fresh start in the small town of Hartsville, North Carolina, ready to put their turbulent past behind them. Violence has shattered their family and left Libby nearly unable to cope. And while Carrie once took comfort in her beloved sister, Emma, her mother has now forbidden even the mention of her name.

When Carrie meets Ruth, Honor and Cricket Chaplin, these three generations of warmhearted women seem to have the loving home Carrie has always dreamed of. But as Carrie and Cricket become fast friends, neither can escape the pull of their families' secrets --- and uncovering the truth will transform the Chaplins and the Parkers forever.

Look for special features inside. Join the Circle for author chats and more.

## Discussion Guide

1. The mother-daughter relationship is an important theme in this novel. What lessons can be learned from Libby and Carrie, and from Honor and Cricket?

2. Why do you think Elizabeth Flock chose to narrate the story from Carrie's and Honor's points of view? How would the novel differ if it were told through the eyes of Cricket? Of Ruth?
  
3. Honor's relationship with Cricket is very different from Eddie's relationship with Cricket. Do you think that father-daughter relationships are inherently different from mother-daughter relationships? If yes, how so?
  
4. What are the characteristics of a strong mother-daughter relationship? Do you think that Honor and Cricket have a strong relationship? What in their relationship works? In what ways do you think Honor approaches motherhood differently than Ruth does?
  
5. Discuss Carrie's relationship with Cricket. How are the two girls alike? How are they different?
  
6. The death of a child has a devastating impact on parents, and the death of Caroline was one of the main reasons that Eddie and Honor separated. Do you think Eddie and Honor would have gotten back together if Carrie hadn't come into their lives?
  
7. Libby seems to put all of her needs before Carrie's. Do you think that she was always like this? Or was there a time when she was good to Carrie? Is Libby's act of confession at the end a sacrifice for her daughter, or is it a selfish act?
  
8. Carrie's flashbacks hint at what really happened to Emma. At any point before the ending, did you guess the truth? What surprised you most?
  
9. Ruth kept alive the dream that she was related to Charlie Chaplin for many years. Is her behavior in any way similar to Carrie keeping alive the dream that her mother cared about her? And that her "good" behavior could influence her mother's moods? Have you ever wanted something so much that you held out false hope? What are the benefits or consequences of fooling ourselves?

**10.**After losing her first child, Honor has a desperate need to keep control in her life. How does Carrie ease Honor's need for control?

**11.**Can you imagine living in a world like Carrie's? Do you think that you would be able to be as resourceful and optimistic as she?

**12.**In this book, Mr. Burdock is the only positive male figure in Carrie's life. Do you think that he should have called Child Protective Services when he saw that Libby wasn't really looking after Carrie? How do you define the line between minding your own business and stepping in to help someone?

**13.**Do you feel differently about Mr. Burdock's inaction versus the Dressers' overreaction? If Honor and Eddie hadn't been wrongly accused of child abuse, do you think that they would have been quicker to intervene in Carrie's situation? Or do you think that Honor made the right decision by feeding and helping Carrie as much as she did?

**14.**Did Carrie's unfamiliarity with modern technology make you think about how much of the way we live our lives has changed over the past few years? How would this story be different if it was set in a time without the Internet? Do you think that Carrie would ever have learned the truth about her family?

**15.**Elizabeth Flock extensively researched child psychology and trauma in order to portray Carrie in a realistic way. Though Carrie is never officially diagnosed or labeled with a psychological condition, how did you interpret her character? Why do you think the author refrained from labeling her in the novel?

## **Author Bio**

Former journalist Elizabeth Flock reported for *Time* and *People* magazines before becoming a television reporter and anchor in San Francisco, California. After moving to New York, Flock became an on-air correspondent for CBS News covering breaking news both in the United States and abroad. Notably, reporting from Havana, Cuba, for Pope John Paul II's visit with Fidel Castro; reporting from London following the death of Princess Diana; and reporting from Hong Kong where she covered the handover from the British to the Chinese.

Flock's acclaimed first novel, *BUT INSIDE I'M SCREAMING*, a fictionalized account of a journalist's fight for sanity, was published by MIRA Books in 2003. Reviewers called the novel "riveting," "insightful," and, in the words of the *Oakland Tribune*

, "hard to put down." But *INSIDE I'M SCREAMING* has since been translated into six languages and has sold nearly a quarter of a million copies.

In 2005, Flock's second novel, *ME & EMMA* (MIRA Books), spent six consecutive weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Called "a triumph" by bestselling author Kathleen DeMarco, *ME & EMMA* has been compared to *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, and was referred to as "haunting?not soon forgotten," by *Booklist*. *Kirkus Reviews* wrote, "Flock captures [the main character's] powerlessness and resourcefulness beautifully?tremendously touching." *ME & EMMA* was chosen as one of the "Best Books of 2005" by *Booksense* and was a *Highlight* Pick of the Year. In addition to being a bestseller in the UK, *ME & EMMA* has been published in 10 countries, translated into seven languages and has sold over 500,000 copies worldwide.

*EVERYTHING MUST GO* (MIRA Books, 2007), Flock's third novel, is set in the Connecticut of her childhood. *The Dallas Morning News* wrote, "in Ms. Flock's talented hands, [Henry] becomes someone readers will keep rooting for long after it would seem the game is over," and *Booklist* wrote, "another strong characterization from Flock, who uncannily immerses herself in [the main character's] vulnerable, yet stalwart, psyche." On the show *Sunday Papers*, WGN-Radio's Rick Kogan called the main character "one of the most interesting characters in contemporary fiction."

Elizabeth Flock lives in New York City and Northeast Harbor, Maine.

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