



A Window Opens

Elisabeth Egan

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In *A Window Opens*, beloved books editor at *Glamour* magazine, Elisabeth Egan, brings us Alice Pearse, a compulsively honest, longing-to-have-it-all, sandwich generation heroine for our social-media-obsessed, lean in (or opt out) age.

Like her fictional forebears Kate Reddy and Bridget Jones, Alice plays many roles (which she never refers to as “wearing many hats” and wishes you wouldn’t, either). She is a mostly-happily married mother of three, an attentive daughter, an ambivalent dog-owner, a part-time editor, a loyal neighbor and a Zen commuter. She is not: a cook, a craftswoman, a decorator, an active PTA member, a natural caretaker or the breadwinner. But when her husband makes a radical career change, Alice is ready to lean in—and she knows exactly how lucky she is to land a job at Scroll, a hip young start-up which promises to be the future of reading, with its chain of chic literary lounges and dedication to beloved classics. The Holy Grail of working mothers?an intellectually satisfying job and a happy personal life?seems suddenly within reach.

Despite the disapproval of her best friend, who owns the local bookstore, Alice is proud of her new “balancing act” (which is more like a three-ring circus) until her dad gets sick, her marriage flounders, her babysitter gets fed up, her kids start to grow up and her work takes an unexpected turn. Readers will cheer as Alice realizes the question is not whether it’s possible to have it all, but what does she?Alice Pearse?really want?

A Window Opens Details

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From Reader Review A Window Opens for online ebook

Rebecca says

A sweet, funny debut novel about a woman who tries to juggle all the elements of a happy life: finding the perfect job for a modern book-lover...but also being a good mother to her three children, supporting her husband after he loses his job at a law firm, and helping her mother care for her father as he suffers a relapse of throat cancer.

New Jersey commuter Alice Pearse goes from writing about books for *You* magazine (I bet Egan doesn't know that's a real publication title in the UK, the *Mail on Sunday*'s women's mag!) to working for the New York City office of Scroll, which plans to open hip, inviting book lounges where readers can experience all the latest e-books. From the get-go Alice has her doubts about a company that has the mantra "Paper Is Poison" and replaces first editions with video games. Is this really the right place for a bibliophile? Best friend Susanna, struggling to keep her independent bookshop open, thinks Alice has basically made a deal with the devil, but what choice does Alice have if she wants to keep the family afloat?

Like other books I've read recently that are set in the publishing world – *Delicious!* by Ruth Reichl, *What Nora Knew* by Linda Yellin, and *Cinema Lumière* by Hattie Holden Edmonds – *A Window Opens* succeeds because its female first-person voice is immediately engaging. You like Alice and root for her.

I suspect the story is highly autobiographical for Egan; it's clear that she knows firsthand the difficulties of balancing a fulfilling career with marriage and motherhood, and sections on facing the loss of a parent are also particularly moving. I thought Alice's hipster colleagues at Scroll were maybe a bit clichéd (Dave Eggers's *The Circle* came to mind), but it's easy to accept that their ideas about books are soulless.

I'll keep an eye out for what Elisabeth Egan writes next.

Amber says

Alice Pearse is a loving mother who loves her kids as well as a loving wife to her husband. She loves her job as a Book editor for You magazine where she reviews and acquires books from Publishers to read for the magazine. When her husband quits his dead-end job at his lawyer firm to start a new one, Alice must find something full-time to let them have food and stay in their house. She finds a new job but it quickly takes the place of her family. Can she handle her job and family life or will it all collapse? Read on and find out for yourself.

I was recently asked by Simon and Schuster to read this book to consider it as a Summer read for the fiction selection at the Reading for Pleasure book club which I nominated it for our August Fiction group read and is currently in the poll to vote for it which voting ends today and the winner selected tomorrow. I borrowed this book at my local library and it was a pretty good read. Thank you so much for the recommendation Simon and Schuster. I enjoyed this. If you love stories about reading, family, and trying to handle it all, then definitely check this book out. This book is currently available at your local library and wherever books and ebooks are sold.

Laurence R. says

I REALLY liked this book.

For some reason, I seem to be reading more books like this one, even though I'm pretty much always young enough to be the main characters' daughter. I don't even care about that fact, because there are so many life lessons in them and I can still find ways to relate to their lives, which always makes my reading experience amazing.

From the very first page, I loved this book. It mentions a book from my favourite author on its very first page, so I knew the main character and I would get along very well. Then, I discovered so many things about Alice's love for books, bookshops and publishing companies that I felt like I was reading an encyclopedia about my passion... In a good way. Sharing such an important part of my life, my love for books, with a MC is an amazing thing!

When I continued reading, I started falling in love with Alice's family, from her adorable kids to her incredible husband. She has one of the best relationships I've read about in a long time, because she and Nicholas are (at least initially) honest, loving and patient with each other. I loved how supportive they are for each other and how their love is still so strong, even after all these years and three kids. I started to fear for their relationship in the middle of the story, but deep down, I always knew that they'd find a way to get through everything life throws at them, because they're just that kind of a couple (the OTP kind, to be honest). Alice's relationship with her parents made me smile and broke my heart, too, because this is the part where I could relate a lot. I think her feelings are very well described and I have to admit I cried more than once while I was reading (which always happened to be in public, of course).

I think everyone would enjoy this lovely novel, because it's bittersweet and full of life lessons that we should all remember.

(Thank you Netgalley for providing me with a digital copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.)

Meghan says

[like when she doesn't want to accept a brownie from a coworker and ends up trying to flush it down a toilet (hide spoiler)]

Veronica ?? says

Nicholas, feeling he is going nowhere in his current job quits and decides to set up his own business. His wife, Alice, worried about future money problems applies for a full time job.

Initially Alice feels let down by Nicholas. She enjoyed her part time job and bringing up their three children. However when she finds a dream job and the freedom and importance that comes with it she starts to think maybe she really can have it all.

Egan's "A Window Opens" is a story of women defined by their actions. The brands they wear, (brand naming plays an important roll in this story) the cars they drive, the restaurants they're seen in and the spin

class they attend. Behind it all is a woman trying to keep up, running from trains to airports, to homes with children already asleep, to school concerts and after school activities. Some women do this effortlessly and so it would seem to an outsider, did Alice. However Alice's world was falling apart. Her husband was drinking too much and she somehow lost her best friend. Her father's cancer had returned more aggressive than ever and she'd let her mother down when she needed her most. Something had to give!

Egan's writing is emotional, meaningful and subtle but powerful. An ode to motherhood mothers everywhere, working or not, will resonate with Alice.

I really didn't think this would be a "tissues required" read but yes, tissues required.

There were a lot of directions the story could have taken to sensationalise it and make it more dramatic but I was pleased that Egan stuck to a tamer plot making the story more realistic, almost like a memoir.

If you love bookish books with lots of book mentions this will delight you with over thirty mentions of other books throughout.

With my thanks to the publisher via Netgalley for my copy to read and review.

Jessica says

I'm hard-pressed to think of a character in recent memory to whom I could relate less than Alice Pease, and so, to me, she ended up feeling like a giant cliche.

Elyse Walters says

Contemporary modern life for Nicholas - Alice- their three young children - and dog has its challenges.

At the beginning of this story, Alice was only working part time- but when her husband didn't make partner with his law firm--- and throws his laptop across the room--- he no longer has a job. His plans are to start his own business... But in the meantime... He has no immediate income coming in.

It doesn't take long until Alice takes a dream - job- demanding job- working full time.... Commuting on the train each way approximately 40 minutes.

As it becomes more challenging to balance work, marriage, kids,her husband has started increasing his drinking from 2 beers a day to more... Switching to vodka and tonic...so as not to see piles of brown beer bottles in The recycle each day.

Alice and her best friend are beginning to show tension in their friendship....due to conflicting values. Her friend owns a book store--- and is sick and tired of people using her store as a showroom... then buying their books online.

Well ... The job Alice takes is more 'high tech' reading. The mission of the company is to re-invent reading

the way Starbucks reinvented coffee..... Creating a peaceful, uninterrupted time at the past and future. There will be membership opportunities... a flat monthly fee...for four titles of their choice each month...special sustained silent reading rooms(pick choice downloading)... While sitting in a comfy leather armchair for serious readers...with waitress service ..foot massages, complimentary biscotti, cup holders with mini hot plates to keep their coffee warm.....and unlimited gummy bears. It's a business that wants to deliver first class experience to their literary lounges.

Alice's best friend... (the bookshop owner), feels like she just got stabbed in the heart by the person she was closest to. She joined the evil - devil team...

So...

Family tensions... Work tensions... Friendship tension...

Then add Alice's very sick father...

It's enough to throw a few more laptops across the room

I didn't find this book haha funny, yet.... It warmed my heart. It's an honest look at look at a family's hectic busy life.....working, paying bills, taking care of the children, the dog, attending school functions, caring for sick parents, dealing with painful personal loss, etc. I felt exhausted, sad, and sometimes very inspired.

Alice and Nicholas had their problems... Kids were not always happy campers either...

But this is a useful book to read... It's very realistic....it allows the reader to think about choices they might make ... Even observe one couple do the very best they can--with their blistering hearts... and watch how this family figures things out for themselves.

A PLUS..., For me: often many books are mentioned in this novel. The author has great taste... I too, loved almost every book she mentioned.....,

"My Antonia", by Willa Cather, "To Kill A Mockingbird", Jonathan Trooperbooks, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, and Zeitoun to name a few.

.... I'm left with wanting to kiss my husband, hug my kids, turn the music up, and smell the roses! love each other!!!! Life can get - complicated- but we can always STOP... to experience what we are grateful for.

Happy Mothers Day ...tomorrow

Thank you to the publisher - Netgalley- and this charming-warm author... for this reading gift!

Tooter says

4 Stars - NetGalley Give-Away

Taylor Knight says

I received this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review

This is such a light read. I was expecting it to be a little... more. Blurbs had said this book was funny but I didn't think it was. There was a few kind of funny parts but I felt like they were forced and didn't really belong. I thought the characters were likable enough even though I didn't really fall in love with them.

I didn't relate to Alice at all just because she seemed to lack ethics and she made some really wacky decisions.

But I did find her interesting. I liked the story line with her father a lot and I wished that would have been the sole story line of the book.

I think for the right reader, this book would be great. But for me personally, I found it to be okay. I didn't hate it but I wish somethings would have been different.

Jennifer says

Smart, funny, and heartfelt, I loved Elisabeth Eagan's new book "A Window Opens." While the overall plot has been done before – Mom goes back to work full-time (to a job that wasn't quite what she thought it would be) and struggles to manage it all – Eagan scores originality points for incorporating main character Claire's struggles with aging/ill parents; creating real, likeable characters; and writing a book for book lovers.

Some of my favorite parts of the book were all of the literary references ranging from the classics to contemporary novels. Some are included to move the story along, others are included strictly for the enjoyment of the audience – sort of like all those cameos in Muppet movies (For example, a bookstore owner is overheard telling a customer, "No, Jonathan *Tropper*. Trust me, he's a lot more fun than Jonathan Franzen.)

Claire also reminisces about dressing up as The Book Lady as a little girl, filling her rolling suitcase with books and walking around the house trying to sell books to her family members. It brought back memories of my own, when as a child I organized all the books on our shelves and created my own version of the Dewey Decimal system. My siblings weren't allowed to take a book from the shelf without first "checking it out" with me!

4.5 enthusiastic stars

Thank you to NetGalley and Simon & Schuster for a galley of this book in exchange for an honest review.

❀Julie says

4 solid stars. Thoroughly enjoyed this book!

Alice Pearse made me feel better about my role as a mom, almost making my crazy paced life look easy. I adored her character, flaws and all, and felt strangely comforted by reading this. I have never been a full-time working mom but could still relate to so much of this story. The part about her dying father was especially moving, and although I could not relate to losing a father, I could relate to the loss of a close loved one and the language felt somehow comforting also. Overall the story was charming and light, but also sad and enlightening. I learned a few lessons with Alice along the way and it made me think about the way my kids see me through their eyes. Even though parts were sad, she didn't take it to a point that made me cry, just to where my eyes would burn, before adding just a touch of humor to lighten it. I listened to the audiobook on the go and the narration was fantastic. The story felt so real I kept thinking I was listening to the author

herself telling her life story.

Sidenote: If I had read the blurb before reading this book I might have passed on it since I was not a fan of "Where'd You Go Bernadette?". For some reason I just couldn't get into that one and was unable to finish it.

Esil says

There's nothing new about the theme or story of *A Window Opens*. Alice lives in the suburbs with her three kids, husband and dog, and works part time for a magazine. Alice's husband loses his job, and Alice gets a job in New York with a new company that is developing an in store digital book concept. And then Alice spends most of the book struggling to do it all -- including coping with her ill father. I say that this common theme is done well because Alice is likeable and recognizable, and the book doesn't preach a solution -- it just really provides an acute reminder that it can be awfully hard to balance all these obligations and remain sane. There's a light tone to the book, but it does highlight some difficult realities for many families -- long work days, long commutes, dissatisfying jobs, a sense of never spending enough time with one's children and spouse, and aging parents can make for an awful lot of stress. That stress comes through loud and clear in *Open a Window*. So depending on how much you can identify with Alice, this may seem entertaining, irrelevant and boring, validating or just a stressful reminder of everything you should be doing but are not doing while you're reading about Alice trying to do it all. Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

DeB MaRtEnS says

Well, this has been read in tandem while I read another book and *A Window Opens* didn't suffer from my diverting attention.

I guess that I don't know who the target audience was meant to be for this novel; young urban high income earners with children? Are there a large percentage of those in the population? On one hand, it was *The Devil Wears Prada* in the new world e-book phoney baloney cruel corporate culture for dear idealistic Alice Pearse, formerly part-time mommy, magazine editor forced to take a full time job with ridiculously high pay and long hours when her husband's job goes up in flames. Kinda funny. I liked that part. Pure chick lit.

Then it was seriously sad, with a dying father and bereaved mother, grief-wracked kids and a husband who found more joy in bottles of booze than he did in the new legal business he was supposedly setting up. The time impact caused by family needs created unreasonable corporate snits and great personal conflict for Alice. Dramatic fiction, but...

Alice got to buy great clothes and look like a grown up in her grown up job. However, she experienced the hardships of not keeping up with her growing children's needs for wardrobes which fit, socks from the laundry not coupled and matched and having her very responsible babysitter taking over all of the time with the kids which used to be hers. Tragic.

Loyal, responsible Alice realizes (we've already figured this out by the second day, so it isn't a spoiler), that she doesn't much like her job, the family doesn't much like her having this job which has her on the phone texting when she IS home, her best friend doesn't like her job because it is in competition with her stock of

real books in the neighbourhood book shop but Alice is afraid of being unable to afford bread without it. Nicholas, her lawyer husband, tells her that his new firm is doing quite well. If they don't upgrade their kitchen with the inheritance from her dad, she should quit the job and figure out what she **WOULD** like to do. Which, you know, is convenient because the babysitter is quitting to take an office job. **LOVE FINDS A WAY!**

I like chick lit because it usually has a flagrant disregard for reality, a large element of "Cinderellaism" and is usually goofily self-disparaging. It's feel good fiction, with sass and doesn't take itself too seriously. Any message is delivered usually one with common sense, aside from the elegant or not froth.

But "A Window Opens" can't make its mind up about what kind of novel it would like to be. It isn't a bad novel; the writing is quite good. It ends up floating in the netherworld of "women's fiction", with cute kid one-liners but no particular purpose. As Alice bemoaned her job while her excellent babysitter provided fabulous care, I thought of the many women who would love to have that advantage. And finally, when Alice decided that she didn't like her job and she could quit, I couldn't help but think of all of the women who must work every day, support their families, tolerate less than self-actualizing working conditions with less than a wonderful salary and aren't in a novel that promotes the hogwash this one does.

It made me want to join her husband Nicholas and drink vodka in the basement.

Diane S ? says

3.5 Alice Pearse is a likable character, a character many of us can identify with. She is a mother to three young children, married and works three days a week at a magazine, reviewing books. That is until her husband finds out he did not make partner and wants to open his own law office, which means Alice must find a full time job until his own office is up and running.

She is offered what she thinks is a dream job, a new type of book store that offers first editions, e-books and other things in awesome setting. Until things change and her dream job morphs into something different.

This is a novel about books vs. e-books, her friend's independent bookstore versus a whole new reading experience. There are humorous bits, usually coming from the mouths of babes, (we all know kids say the darndest things). A novel that asks the question, Is it ever possible to really have it all? To find out what Alice decides you need to read the novel. A lighter read, but one that deals with some important issues, issues relating to what is called the sandwich generation among others.

ARC from publisher.

Angela M says

3 + stars .

A contemporary story on multiple levels, dealing with women juggling their roles and coping with the challenges of every day life. There's an interesting focus for book lovers on e-books vs book stores. Add in

an ailing parent , marital issues and drinking problems , questionable corporate intentions, and it sounds like this might not be a fun book to read . And it isn't funny per se , but there's humor and family and the literary references that make this an enjoyable read . I also loved the text messages between Alice and her father and her memory of herself as a little girl as "the Booklady" selling books to her father .

Alice ,wife and mother, with a part time job , feeling as if she had the best of both worlds is suddenly forced to get a full time job when her husband doesn't make partner at his law firm. Alice is a character that many women will be able to connect with and her discoveries about herself and what's important in life will reach home for many . My favorite quote is from Alice's little girl Georgie - "What do you daydream about? "

A predictable ending but that was fine with me .

Thanks to Simon and Schuster and NetGalley.
