



Kinship of Clover

A NOVEL BY

Ellen Meeropol

The environment is dying and the plants have chosen you to save them. You're going to make a difference . . . but at what cost?

He was nine when the vines first wrapped themselves around him and burrowed into his skin. Now a college botany major, Jeremy is desperately looking for a way to listen to the plants and stave off their extinction. But when the grip of the vines becomes too intense and Health Services starts asking questions, he flees to Brooklyn, where fate puts him face to face with a group of climate-justice activists who assure him they have a plan to save the planet, and his plants. As the group readies itself to make a big Earth Day splash, Jeremy soon realizes these eco-terrorists' devotion to activism might have him—and those closest to him—tangled up in more trouble than he was prepared to face. With the help of a determined, differently abled flame from his childhood, Zoe; her deteriorating, once-rabble-rousing grandmother; and some shocking and illuminating revelations from the past, Jeremy must weigh completing his mission to save the plants against protecting the ones he loves, and confront the most critical question of all: *how do you stay true to the people you care about while trying to change the world?*

From the author of *House Arrest* and *On Hurricane Island* comes a thrilling new activist novel that begs the question, "How far is too far?"

ADVANCE PRAISE

"Ellen Meeropol has an uncanny knack for examining the big topics of our contemporary world and putting a human face on them. In *Kinship of Clover*, she does this with intelligence and a big generous heart. An important book by a unique writer, it's a must read."

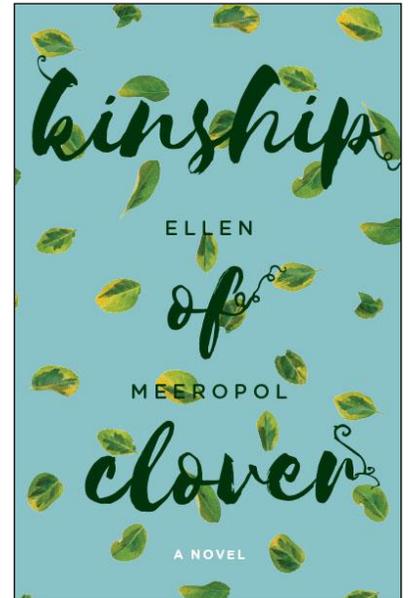
—Ann Hood, author of *The Knitting Circle*

"Ellen Meeropol's new novel, *Kinship of Clover*, is a stunning kaleidoscope of humanity, with characters so real and complicated and full of life that you'll want to linger with them over coffee long after the last page is turned. She treats them all with tremendous generosity, but it's her creation of Flo, the feisty revolutionary whose mind is devoured a little more each day by Alzheimer's, who won my heart through and through."

—Emily Crowe, Odyssey Bookshop (South Hadley, MA)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Meeropol is the author of two previous novels, *House Arrest* and *On Hurricane Island*, and the dramatic program, *Carry it Forward*, about the Rosenberg Fund for Children. A former nurse practitioner and part-time bookseller, Ellen is fascinated by characters balanced on the fault lines between political turmoil and human connection. Her short fiction and essays have appeared in *Bridges*, *Dove Tales*, *Pedestal*, *Rumpus*, *Portland Magazine*, the *Writer's Chronicle*, and others. Ellen is a founding member of Straw Dog Writers Guild.



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MORE PRAISE FOR *KINSHIP OF CLOVER*

“Midway through this wonderful novel, you will find a woman dancing in her wheelchair. That scene is one of many memorable moments in a story about young people organizing for a sustainable future, even as their once-radical elders try to hold on to a gradually disappearing past. This is a book about time and love, politics and family, and it is sharply observant and deeply compassionate.”

—Charles Baxter, author of *The Feast of Love*

“Ellen Meeropol brings her keen political sense and psychological understanding to this story of family secrets and family trauma. *Kinship of Clover* is compelling and the characters stay with you long after you’ve finished the book.”

—Nancy Felton, co-owner, Broadside Bookshop (Northampton, MA)

“*Kinship of Clover* counters our culture’s typically insular fiction. From a teenage girl in a wheelchair experiencing her first romantic relationship, to an older activist suffering from Alzheimer’s, to a father adjusting after years in prison, to a young man affected by childhood trauma, to environmentalists worried about global destruction, to biracial characters accepting their heritage, *Kinship of Clover* depicts our diversity. Meeropol’s social concerns drive issues that surround these sensitively drawn characters. But the novel’s subjects are secondary to the story, one as elaborate and engaging as its ideological undercurrent.”

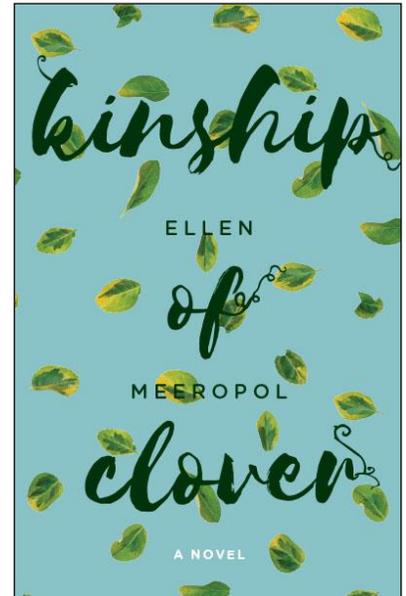
—Nan Cuba, author of *Body and Bread*

“Ellen Meeropol, writing with heartbreaking truth, clarity, and empathy, illustrates how deeply entwined are the search for justice, the cost society imposes on political beliefs, and the price children can pay for their parent’s convictions. *Kinship of Clover* weaves strands of family and friends who go back decades, in connections and beliefs, until you are desperate to see the final fabric. Meeropol had me turning pages deep into the night, forcing me to think, making me cry, and, finally, having me believe in the possibility of a better world. I loved this book.”

—Randy Susan Meyers, author of *Accidents of Marriage*

“This smart, lyrical novel cooks up a cast of quirky characters dealing as best they can with a host of 21st century issues: climate change and biodiversity loss, physical and mental illness; personal tragedy, alternative lifestyles and the enduring love among friends and family. Ellen Meeropol’s deep knowledge of the environment, health care, progressive politics and the human heart shines through on every page. A thought-provoking delight to read; I couldn’t put it down!”

—Jennifer Browdy, Ph.D., author of *What I Forgot...And Why I Remembered: A Journey to Awareness and Activism Through Purposeful Memoir*



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FROM KINSHIP OF CLOVER

When Zoe and Jeremy got to Flo's room that evening, the party was already in progress. Mimi had set up a folding card table in the middle of the room, covered it with a tablecloth in Van Gogh colors, and set out wine, tortilla chips, and salsas labeled Hot, Hotter, Hottest. Sam perched on the windowsill close to Flo, who held court in her reading chair by the window. She raised her wineglass to the newcomers.

"Welcome," Flo said. "Now, the party can really begin." She took a drink and blew them a winey kiss.

Jeremy hung back, but Zoe took his hand and pulled him into the middle of the room. "This is Jeremy," she announced. "And these," she said, waving her arm across the four women sitting side by side on the bed, "are my grandma's best buddies."

"I'm Mimi, and I'm so glad to meet you." Mimi sprung forward and gave him a mini-hug, the kind meant to welcome.

Jeremy looked surprised and Sam smiled to himself. He still felt overwhelmed in the presence of these women, even after knowing them his whole life. If Jeremy didn't feel that way now, he soon would. That is, if he stuck around.

Marlene waved. "I'm Marlene and we're the Girls' Club."

"We're the Sisterhood," Fanny interrupted. "And I'm Fanny."

Mimi laughed. "Give it a rest, guys. These kids don't care about our group's name."

Claire stood and shook Jeremy's hand. "I'm Claire and I don't care about our name, either. But I'm happy to meet you."

Flo leaned forward and took the spoon from the Hottest salsa, licked it, and tapped it on her wineglass.

"Enough small talk," Flo said. "Tonight's party is in honor of my brain, my doomed and decaying brain, and my big mouth. Tomorrow they start drugs to shut me up."

"You have such a delicate way with words, Ma," Sam said. "Not to mention a healthy dose of paranoia. You know, the medicine *might* help."

Flo dipped her head at him, in regal acknowledgement of the possibility. "Maybe. But tonight might be my last chance to say what I think."

Mimi laughed. "You've been saying what you think every single day for the forty-five years I've known you. Probably long before that, too."

"Still, this might be my intellectual swan song. And I particularly want to address these young people. They're the ones to carry on my work."

Sam rolled his eyes. "Please, Ma. No political speeches."

Flo pointed the spoon at Sam and he saw her eyes fog over for a quick moment, as if she was looking past him, and then she continued. "Just because you're an apolitical slug, doesn't that mean your daughter and her young man are also?"

She turned to Jeremy. "You asked me a question a few days ago. You asked how to fight a threat that's overwhelming, when defeat and disaster seem inevitable."

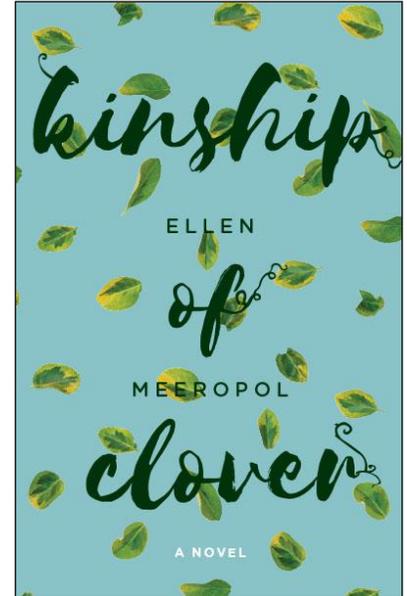
Jeremy nodded. Zoe took his hand.

"Which threat?" Mimi asked. "There are so many."

"Terracide," Jeremy said. "Global warming." He glanced at Flo but she was gazing into her wine, deep in thought.

"I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues," quoted Zoe. "*The Lorax* was my favorite book as a kid. What's your wise advice, Grandma? How do we save the world?"

Flo stared into her wineglass, swirling the rich burgundy liquid into a vortex that climbed higher and higher up the sides of the glass, pulling her in like the tide. The words swirled, too, all those Seuss-words she used to recite over and over with Zoe. "The trees have no tongues," she whispered and the eddy pulled her in deeper and she spun the glass faster and the tide pulled harder and the wine climbed closer to the rim and then it was over the rim and onto her hand and into her lap and the glass fell to the floor and shattered.



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