

Call Me Floy

Joanna Cooke

Yosemite Conservancy (May 12, 2020)

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"If there are to be stories about me, if I am to be a tameless girl, then let the story be mine," says Florence "Floy" Hutchings in Joanna Cooke's biographical novel *Call Me Floy*.

Headstrong, eleven-year-old Floy's story is set during the early years of Yosemite National Park; it follows her passionate dream to be one of the first people to ever scale Half Dome. Trapped in the confines of San Francisco, where she's made to wear dresses, Floy longs for Yosemite, where she grew up. Just as she plans to sneak back, her father announces their return, and Floy's dream is reawakened.

Enlivened by rich similes, the book's Yosemite sweeps across the page. Floy's connection with the land and its difficult beauty pervades her story. Knowing how to survive in this place gives her power, and Floy revels in reading the signs of the trails.

Floy's perspective takes note of the rampant sexism that was only partially broken by the wilds of Yosemite. While safety, necessity, and familiarity sometimes take precedent, allowing some bold women and girls the opportunity to be adventurers, wear trousers, and ride astride, opportunities dwindle as Floy is asked to assume the roles and manners of a woman of her time. As she feels her role change, she also sees the reactions of tourists towards her Native American friend Sally Ann; people brand her as either "dirty" or a mere curiosity to be ogled.

Restless, energetic Floy stands at the center of massive change—for herself, for the country, for Yosemite, for the Native Americans, and for the rights of women. Those vital forces come together in Joanna Cooke's novel, driving Floy on her epic, complex coming-of-age adventure.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (May / June 2020)

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