



# The Farm

Written by Joanne Ramos

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The Farm

# The Farm

By Joanne Ramos

## The Farmers Union

13 hours, 54 minutes

## The Farmer's Dog

Nestled in the Hudson Valley is a sumptuous retreat boasting every amenity: organic meals, private fitness trainers, daily massages—and all of it for free. In fact, you get paid big money—more than you've ever dreamed of—to spend a few seasons in this luxurious locale. The catch? For nine months, you belong to the Farm. You cannot leave the grounds; your every move is monitored. Your former life will seem a world away as you dedicate yourself to the all-consuming task of producing the perfect baby for your Überwealthy clients.

## The Farm Riverdale

Jane, an immigrant from the Philippines and a struggling single mother, is thrilled to make it through the highly competitive Host selection process at the Farm. But now pregnant, fragile, consumed with worry for her own young daughter's well-being, Jane grows desperate to reconnect with her life outside. Yet she cannot leave the Farm or she will lose the life-changing fee she'll receive on deliveryâ€”or worse.

## The Farmhouse Inn

Heartbreaking, suspenseful, provocative, *The Farm* pushes our thinking on motherhood, money, and merit to the extremes, and raises crucial questions about the trade-offs women will make to fortify their futures and the futures of those they love.

Or will she admit, as she has rarely conceded, that life is sometimes more complicated than easy judgements? That maybe, sometimes, you do the most good when it seems like you're doing nothing much at all.

Some time ago, I read a starred review for *The Farm*, requested an arc, got approved, and then promptly forgot everything about the book that had made me want to read it in the first place. And let me tell you: I think this is the best possible thing that could have happened.

Words like "dystop Or will she admit, as she has rarely conceded, that life is sometimes more complicated than easy judgements? That maybe, sometimes, you do the most good when it seems like you're doing nothing much at all.

Some time ago, I read a starred review for *The Farm*, requested an arc, got approved, and then promptly forgot everything about the book that had made me want to read it in the first place. And let me tell you: I think this is the best possible thing that could have happened.

Words like "dystopia" are being thrown around in reviews of the *The Farm*, as are comparisons to *The Handmaid's Tale*, but this is misleading. This book should not be regarded as a dystopia; it is a mere breath away from reality. It is almost entirely a contemporary. Most, if not all, of what happens in this book is already happening. If I had gone into this believing I was getting a dystopian novel, I would have been disappointed.

Instead, *The Farm* is better viewed as a character-driven exploration of race, immigrants, class, and reproductive rights in modern America. As technology develops, we see the disappearance of blue collar jobs, long-filled by immigrants and the poorest Americans. Out of this will grow - and are growing - service-based jobs. One such job that is increasingly becoming an option for former blue collar workers is surrogacy. This is not a dystopian matter. Companies like Growing Generations already exist, offering you the chance to earn up to \$63,000, plus benefits.

This book is about a company called Golden Oaks, similar to Growing Generations above, except that it offers a live-in center for the surrogates to be free from outside threats and distractions, eat only the most nutritious food, and live stress-free.

Ramos uses this setting to examine several very different characters. There's Jane, a Filipina who joins Golden Oaks to earn money for her own 6-month-old baby, and her older cousin, Evelyn, who has a long history of caring for rich people's newborns. There's white, pretty and educated Reagan, a "premium host" who is driven by her need to do good and be of use. There's Lisa, also white, who is on

## The Farm

her third pregnancy at Golden Oaks and frequently criticizes the center for its exploitation, calling it "The Farm".

Reagan laughs, surprising herself. It isn't funny, but it is. It's all completely ridiculous: three pregnant women carrying other people's babies talking about second-trimester sex pangs and trying to guess which one of them harbours a billionaire's fetus.

Through these women, the author weaves a tale that I personally found fascinating. She looks at the way people can be exploited and manipulated based on their character profiles. She looks at racial and class bias and the ludicrous way rich Americans will pay so much more for a white, educated "host" when the kid is 100% theirs anyway. It's ridiculous, and yet I absolutely believed in it.

There are, of course, lots of morality questions. So much deceit goes on under the guise of protecting the surrogates from stress, and the hosts' contracts create many issues. Mae-Yu, the Chinese-American running Golden Oaks, finds loophole after loophole to lie to both clients and surrogates. Questions arise as to whether the center should be allowed to force an abortion, and whose life takes precedence - surrogate or baby's - when the host has signed a contract promising to use their best efforts to ensure the wellbeing of the unborn child.

Ramos really understands all her characters. Her writing never falters as she takes us inside such very different minds and makes each one completely believable. She must have put a lot of thought into all of their situations and motivations. And there are a number of very moving moments, too. I really enjoyed it.

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## The Farm Movie

The Farm is a story about women serving as surrogates (hosts) for wealthy clients at Golden Oaks, a private estate in New York. The host selection process is intense and competitive, but offers a large financial reward for those selected who do not breach the strict terms of their contract.

The story predominately focuses on Jane, an immigrant from the Philippines, who makes the difficult decision to serve as a host in order to help provide a better life for her young daughter Amalia.

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The story predominately focuses on Jane, an immigrant from the Philippines, who makes the difficult decision to serve as a host in order to help provide a better life for her young daughter Amalia.

Jane's older cousin Ate, other hosts at the farm, and Mae, Golden Oaks's Director of Operations, are secondary characters in the story. The book is focused on class and privilege, highlighted by the various decisions different characters make (or have the options to make) depending on their own personal motivations.

The premise of The Farm was interesting, yet the execution was average. The ending was a bit unrealistic. I kept hoping the story would pick up and get better but it just remained an ok read for me.

Thank you to NetGalley and Random House for providing an advanced copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. ...more

The Farm is a place where women (especially immigrants) go to serve as surrogates for wealthy families while living in spa-like surroundings. These women are handsomely paid for their services making it a win-win for both parties.

Oh man this could have been such a great book.

If you dive into this book thinking you're getting a nightmarish Handmaid's Tale-ish take on a baby harvesting farm then you're going to be disappointed.

This is a story about class and privilege and the disparity between the The Farm is a place where women (especially immigrants) go to serve as surrogates for wealthy families while living in spa-like surroundings. These women are handsomely paid for their services making it a win-win for both parties.

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## The Farm

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This is a story about class and privilege and the disparity between the high and low ends of the spectrum. The wealthy achieving their goals on the back of those less fortunate has always been the way in America and this story gives a unique take on that truth.

"....in America you only need to know how to make money. Money buys everything else."

After reading this book I feel like the author promised more than she delivered.

The entire book hints at some underlying evil going on at the farm yet nothing ever happens on that front. The Farm itself is pretty straightforward leaving the story to rest solely on the characters, namely the surrogates.

Aside from Jane, the main character, we don't learn a whole lot about the other surrogates, the wealthy parents-to-be or the people running the farm.

Although Joanne Ramos has written a book featuring a timely subject matter, her telling of the story falls flat on all fronts.

I received an ARC from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. ...more

## The Farmer In The Dell

“The Farm” ... called “Golden Oaks”, is a surrogacy Farm. Women are impregnated with sperm to host a child. Most of the “host women” are black Caribbean immigrant women. They need jobs - the money is good. The clients are wealthy and white.

It’s an intriguing story - but the writing often felt motionless and toneless. I kept wanting to add some Technicolor.

Jane, ( who left her own baby behind), Lisa, ( feisty rebel of the bunch), and Reagan are all hosts on the farm. Each went through intensive “The Farm” ... called “Golden Oaks”, is a surrogacy Farm. Women are impregnated with sperm to host a child. Most of the “host women” are black Caribbean immigrant women. They need jobs - the money is good. The clients are wealthy and white. It’s an intriguing story - but the writing often felt motionless and toneless. I kept wanting to add some Technicolor.

Jane, ( who left her own baby behind), Lisa, ( feisty rebel of the bunch), and Reagan are all hosts on the farm. Each went through intensive vetting before they were selected. Other main characters are Ate, ( too old to be a host mother- but had been a master Nanny Queen in her prime), and Mae. (Ms. Wealthy-bossy of “Golden Oaks”)...

For nine months the host women are medically monitored. At the end of nine months - the infant gets handed over to the client whose embryo they carry.

The host women are offered many spa benefits - but also potential penalties.

Topic Themes explored are race, class, inequality, wealth, poverty, immigration, motherhood, trust, friendships, personal freedom, rules, sacrifice, self expression, exploitation, manipulation, childcare, big business, greed, fear and isolation, radical politics, and morality, with an all women dominated cast of characters.

The main female leads and the supporting females all have something to say. At times - there was not much difference between any of them, other than we knew who the HAVES and HAVE NOTS were.

I wanted to like this more than I did. The ending is weak and the epilogue just felt long and senseless.

At the same time - I honestly felt this book had potential.

“The Farm”, itself....had me thinking ( not particularly with all the stereotyping and the far-fetched scenarios)...but I do think it’s possible there are surrogacy home - retreats or otherwise. With integrity, these places could be a supportive environment for those serious about surrogacy.

Thank you Random House Publishing, Netgalley, and Joanne Ramos ...more

This was an ok read, but could have been even better.

## The Farm

The Farm is a place where young women are recruited to become surrogate mothers for wealthy clients. The recruits are watched at all times, even their emails are monitored, they have a prescribed diet and an exercise plan they have to adhere to. Motivated by the hefty cash bonus paid upon baby delivery, Jane, a single mother from the Philippines, signs up. Jane doesn't mind being at the Farm at first but soon starts missing her little daughter. This was an ok read, but could have been even better.

The Farm is a place where young women are recruited to become surrogate mothers for wealthy clients. The recruits are watched at all times, even their emails are monitored, they have a prescribed diet and an exercise plan they have to adhere to. Motivated by the hefty cash bonus paid upon baby delivery, Jane, a single mother from the Philippines, signs up. Jane doesn't mind being at the Farm at first but soon starts missing her little daughter who is less than a year old and was left behind to be looked after by Jane's cousin.

What the book does well is highlighting the economic disparity between rich and poor, the struggles of immigrants and ethnic minorities and their financial motivation to join the Farm. I also appreciated the insight into the lives of Filipino women living in the US. However, one of the problems I had with this book was that there were too many side stories and characters thrown in that were totally unnecessary as they did not add anything to the overall story. The story is told from a number of POV, following stories of a couple of girls at the Farm, the Farm director and Jane's cousin. I did care about Jane and her story and I wished there was more focus on her as the main character.

The ending of the story surprised me, but not in a good way. It felt as if the author wanted a happy ending for every character at all costs, when clearly, things happened between certain characters that they would struggle to put behind them in real life.

Overall, I think the premise of the book is unique and thought-provoking but in my opinion, the author did not push the envelope far enough. What could have been a jaw-dropping dystopia ended up being just an average novel.

Many thanks to the publisher for my review copy. ...more

## The Farm Napa

2.5 ~ Meh™ Stars

A bit predictable, one-dimensional, the only thing that wasn't flat for me is the image on the cover. The ending is oddly disconnected to the rest of the book, as though there's an entire thought process or some key information missing. That being said, I do think that this will likely be commercially successful because it seems to promise so much more.

If you're thinking this is some sci-fi or dystopian story, it's not. If you're thinking of reading this with some idea that this is 2.5 ~ Meh™ Stars

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If you're thinking this is some sci-fi or dystopian story, it's not. If you're thinking of reading this with some idea that this is about women or couples or gay couples so desperate to have a baby or babies that they hire a surrogate to do the physical labor for them, that's closer to the truth, but even there I felt the story fell flat, and felt untrue. If you're thinking it's about poor women, perhaps especially immigrants, who choose to carry another's child through gestation for financial rewards, it is "but it's more about those who prey on those weak enough, desperate enough, or whose upper-class privileged background has them wanting to give back in some way.

The Farm, called Golden Oaks, transports these women into a comfortable dorm-like setting, where they are then monitored, what they eat, where they go, who they talk to, etc. for the duration of their pregnancy. For some, this is a step up, in terms of setting, but they all seem to have issues with the level of monitoring for one reason or another.

The message of this novel seems to be summed up in one sentence:

• Because in America you only have to know how to make money. Money buys everything else. •

I kept reading thinking this would have more redeeming value at some point, and when I finished reading it I realized I was wrong. The writing is good enough, without being poignant or beautifully written. The epilogue seemed pointless and I was confused why it was even included since it seemed to detract some from the main story and added nothing to it for me.

Surrogacy is an ancient practice that has evolved since Sarai directed Abraham to go to her maid that she might bear his child through her, but this story seemed to wander in the desert for too long, leaving

The Farm

me thirsting for more.

Pub Date: 07 May 2019

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Random House Publishing Group â€” Random House ...more

I absolutely loved this book! The Farm, is the story of a young woman who will do anything to provide for her baby girl. She ends up at Golden Oaks, which is a 'farm' for wealthy people to have babies through surrogates.

I thought this book was beautifully written, and very thought provoking. Although, the subject was an uncomfortable one, I don't think the writer executed it in a way that will make you cringe.

I think it's a very accomplished, impressive debut and can't wait to see the writer's I absolutely loved this book! The Farm, is the story of a young woman who will do anything to provide for her baby girl.

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...more

## The Farmhouse

The Farm has a phenomenal premise with well-executed imagery. The grounds of the "farm" and described so that you feel you're there yourself and the characters are all lifelike and realistic. BUT, I didn't like this book as much as I'd hoped I would when I eagerly picked it up. The situations Jane finds herself in the farm lacked the emotion and drama that I'd hoped for. While she was so upset at how confining the farm was, I honestly felt like a lot of the situations weren't that big of a deal. The Farm has a phenomenal premise with well-executed imagery. The grounds of the "farm" and described so that you feel you're there yourself and the characters are all lifelike and realistic. BUT, I didn't like this book as much as I'd hoped I would when I eagerly picked it up. The situations Jane finds herself in the farm lacked the emotion and drama that I'd hoped for. While she was so upset at how confining the farm was, I honestly felt like a lot of the situations weren't that big of a deal and were completely fair under the terms she'd offered to work for the farm. And while I know that Ramos wanted to be true to the soft-spoken, Filipino woman she wanted to portray, I found Jane too meek and boring to really root for her. ...more

As an avid reader, I can certainly recognize why this book is receiving the hype that it has been getting. The focus on women's bodies, their role as mothers and the business side of pregnancy have been and continue to be very relevant issues. In fact, it makes *The Farm* a really great candidate for your next bookclub night. I just don't find myself on that hype train.

A story narrated by several different female characters and I wasn't able to connect with them. Actually, that isn't REALLY true. As an avid reader, I can certainly recognize why this book is receiving the hype that it has been getting. The focus on women's bodies, their role as mothers and the business side of pregnancy have been and continue to be very relevant issues. In fact, it makes *The Farm* a really great candidate for your next bookclub night. I just don't find myself on that hype train.

A story narrated by several different female characters and I wasn't able to connect with them. Actually, that isn't REALLY true, I actually did find Mae's storyline fascinating and she was such a strongly written character. I felt that I could question her ethics and role in this whole baby making business a heck of a lot more than other characters. It was Jane and Regan- the two characters I believe I was supposed to have a lot of empathy for - I just didn't!

Given the fact that I found myself continuing to shift this book down on my reading priority list, but did enjoy some elements in the story, it was a 3 rating for me.

Thanks to Netgalley and Random House Publishing Group for a digital galley in exchange for an honest review.

Publication Date 07/05/19

Goodreads Review 11/05/19 ...more

## The Farm Book

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### Review of The Farm and Q & A with Joanne Ramos

What could be better than living on sprawling beautiful property in the country, healthy food being served to you, fresh air and exercise, massages and pampering, and a generous, life changing paycheck, while all your needs are being met? The catchâ€¦you must stay on the premises and be separated from your family and friends for nine months while you are pregnant with a baby that doesnâ€™t belong to you.

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In this stunning debut novel, *The Farm*, female-centric and slightly dystopian (will be appealing to fans of *The Handmaidâ€™s Tale*), author Joanne Ramos creates Golden Oaks, a secluded, country club atmosphere in Hudson Valley, NY where mostly foreign women are bearing children for elite clients who are not able to get pregnant or who choose not to.

Jane, a young, single Filipina mom with an infant, no husband and no secure place to live, decides to leave her own baby with her cousin, Ate, and take a job at Golden Oaks, where she will make enough money to better her life. She is chosen to be a Host, living in a luxury house in the middle of the countryside where her only job is to rest and keep the baby inside her healthy. Nine months is a long time to be separated from your family and as time goes on, Jane starts to question the value of that big paycheck versus her sacrifices associated with being away. She is worried about her young daughter and her cousin, and is unsure the money alone is an adequate tradeoff for the painful separation and the missing of milestones.

Joanne Ramos takes a look at class status; what poor women will give up to ultimately improve their lives, and what wealthy women give up to avoid inconvenience. How much is worth sacrificing for the American Dream? This is a thought provoking, emotionally charged novel I highly recommend! PREORDER TODAYâ€” available May 7, 2019.

*The Farm* is part of the Bedside Reading program where books are placed on the nightstand at 5 star, luxury and boutique hotels.

## Goodreads Summary

### Q & A With Joanne Ramos

Q: How did you come up with the idea for a novel centered on a surrogacy farm and do you know anyone that ever worked at one?

A. When I finally dared to commit to writing a book, a childhood dream I'd deferred for decades, I was already forty. Certain ideas had obsessed me for much of my life but finding a way into them—finding the right story to contain them and, also, allow them room to breathe—was difficult. I spent well over a year writing short stories, flash-fiction pieces and “first chapters” of stillborn novels. It was an exercise in persistence and, also, faith. Then one day, when reading my husband's Wall Street Journal, I happened upon a snippet of an article about a surrogacy facility in India. The what ifs began swirling in my mind almost immediately, and The Farm began to take shape.

Q: In this country do you see Filipina women experiencing economic and social challenges and in general struggling more than white women? And if so, in what way?

A. I don't think you can really generalize in this way. I know Filipinas who struggle and those who lead cushy lives, and the same goes for white women. I think new immigrants to this country—and they come in all races and colors—do face challenges that ensconced Americans do not. I think domestic workers occupy a strange netherworld where they work in the intimacy of someone's home and are often hailed as “part of the family” but of course, they aren't. That's a difficult line to balance every day, and by and large, domestic workers don't enjoy the protections that other workers in this country do. And of course, racism exists—here and everywhere.

Q: In The Farm we see women of different social classes and even in the same class using each other to get ahead. With the #MeToo movement, it generally seems as if most women are outwardly supporting all women across dividing lines. Do you think the situation in your novel is closer to reality? Do you believe women stand by their children first, then other women second?

A. Women, like men, have conflicting needs, desires and loyalties which they try their best to balance. Sometimes they need to compromise; some compromises are betrayals, depending on which side you sit on. Even within the #MeToo movement you see divisions—women who feel #MeToo has gone too far, women who feel it has not gone far enough, women who can relate and women who can't, women who are changing their minds because of it.

Q: The influence men have on the women in The Farm seems nonexistent. Why did you decide not to include men in the storyline?

A. I didn't exclude men from The Farm consciously. The book started with Jane and Ate. Their voices

## The Farm

came first. All the caregivers I happen to know well are women, and almost all of them are raising their children on their own—the fathers are absent. So, in this way, Jane and Ate's stories reflect the reality I know. Of course, the Hosts are women, and it made sense to me that the person running Golden Oaks would be a woman. The decision was not one made "on-high", but an organic development.

Q: Female inequality is a subject that is underlying throughout your novel. But the women considered to be the lowest on the totem pole also have the greatest power, the ability to bear a child. You could have gone a different way in the novel, giving the pregnant women the upper hand. Why choose to create a world that diminishes the unique and valuable aspect of womanhood?

A. I don't think that motherhood or pregnancy is diminished in The Farm at all! In fact, they are central to the book. The reality is, though, that the power dynamics of the world are not built around motherhood and pregnancy. In fact, for most of history, and in many parts of the world still, the opposite is true.

Q: How long did it take you to write this novel?

A. If you count the year and a half when I wrote in the dark, trying unsuccessfully to find a way "into" the themes that mattered to me, it took around five years. Once I came upon the idea of setting the action in a luxury surrogacy facility, the book took three and a half years to write and edit.

Q: What are you working on now?

A. I have some seedlings of ideas for a second book, but nothing coherent enough to discuss.

Q: What are the last three great books you read and what is on your night stand now?

The History of Love, Nicole Krauss

Essential Essays, Adrienne Rich

Hold Still, Sally Mann

On my nightstand: Forest Dark, Nicole Krauss; Citizen: an American Lyric, Claudia Rankine; The Order of Time, Carlo Rovelli; Saltwater, Jessica Andrews

More information about surrogacy below.

Celebrities who have used surrogacy to grow their family

Surrogacy Farms in India

## Surrogacy Farms in Ukraine

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There has been a lot of hype surrounding Joanne Ramos's debut novel, so I must begin by saying: yes, this is one of those rare occasions that the noise was completely justified. Many have described it as a contemporary of Margaret Atwood's dystopian masterpiece *The Handmaid's Tale*, but given the dire situation the world currently finds itself in *The Farm* is not a million miles away from reality.

So forget what you've been told this is a stunning, complex work of fiction with its roots firmly base  
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So forget what you've been told this is a stunning, complex work of fiction with its roots firmly based in real-world events. Make no mistake, it is a challenging read and brings forth many philosophical, moral and ethical questions which I always appreciate in my fiction. It is so well constructed that you simply cannot fail to be drawn in from very early on. I fully expect this to rapidly become a bestseller and to leave its mark on readers as it did with me.

The effort that has gone into making this a multifaceted, powerful and searingly emotive tale holding many important messages for its readers show that this has been a labour of love for Ms Ramos. We have been warned for several years now about the beginning of the end for people employed in low-skilled jobs as a direct result of the emergence of technology which can carry out those jobs with increased efficiency whilst negating the need to pay a wage or salary. This means those who are made redundant must find an alternative method of making a living, but with little to no expertise, this leaves few jobs open to them.

And that's where Golden Oaks, a facility that houses surrogates for the duration of their pregnancy, comes in. Catering to the uber-wealthy the hosts' lives are controlled in every possible way from conception right through to birth.

Ramos uses this divisive set-up to comment on a variety of increasingly important topics, including the ever-widening gap between the rich and poor, technological advancement as a double edge sword, surrogacy, reproductive rights, exploitation, class, race and immigration. She manages with considerable aplomb to show just how lost we've become as a species, but most of all, it signifies just how quickly the famed American dream can turn into a hellish nightmare.

Each of the female inmates is intricately developed as well as three-dimensional, and each holds a different perspective which helps make the story fully rounded. One of the parts that really stood out

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The Farm

for me was the fact that these affluent Americans seeking a surrogate will pay significantly more for a white host who is well educated than any other race. Sadly, this seems to be reflective of our reality to some extent where some individuals in society perpetuate the ugly idea of white supremacy, whether intentional or incidental is beside the point.

The Farm is an ominous, claustrophobic, character-driven reality check and an astounding and thoroughly accomplished debut. Thought-provoking, beautifully written and incredibly original, Ramos is a master storyteller who has disguised this intelligent and eminently readable piece, which could be perceived as a warning, as fictional, but given that most of what happens in the book is already happening in reality - just how fictitious is it? Many thanks to Bloomsbury Publishing for an ARC. ...more