

# **Know That You Can be Free**

An Interview with Morgan Stone:  
Adventurer, Heroine, Misfit

Interviewer - Elena Ivanova

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## **MORGAN (MEG) STONE**

**Heroine** - In 2006 Meg helped me flee Russia: an increasingly hateful and oppressive country. In March 2006, we started our escape in Kiev, Ukraine. In April 2007, we arrived safely in Victoria, Canada. We'd spent months in hiding, and survived a ten-month ocean crossing journey in a sailboat.

**Adventurer** - Escaping to Canada with me, has deeply changed Meg and her view of the world. She now sees no other option but to learn, experience and explore the unknown by traveling the world any way possible - by sailboat, plane, train, car or donkey cart.

**Misfit** - As a result of her somewhat "unconventional" activities: saving Russians, exchanging her house for freedom, experiencing the world in unimaginable ways, and living her life the way she wants to, Meg is admired by some people, and ostracized by others.

Meg infected me with her hunger for life, and her unswerving determination to choose her own path. She has changed me and my life thoroughly, and I know that the same can happen to you, to anyone. You just have to know that you can be free. This interview with Meg is intended to do just that.

*"How can I not do these things?"*

## MEG, AN ADVENTURER

**ELENA: You do things that many people would consider to be crazy or reckless, others would say you live your life to the fullest. What would you say to them?**

MEG: I say, to each their own. It really doesn't matter to me.

**ELENA: It doesn't matter to you, what people think about you? How they evaluate your actions?**

MEG: No. Just as long as they pay me (laughs). Really, I don't care what they think. If they try to change me, that's annoying, I tend to ignore them. If they're hell-bent on imposing their behavioral expectations, I distance myself.

**ELENA: The things that you did, like sailing, building a house, flying planes, climbing mountains - all this takes a lot of courage and energy. What is that inner force that makes you do these things?**

MEG: How can I not do these things? I do them because I want to. The inner force you allude to is simply *desire*.

**ELENA: Why don't you just find a job for yourself and sit in four walls?**

MEG: Don't want to. It wouldn't be right for me; unless it was something I wanted to do, believed in, or was part of a goal I needed to attain. Otherwise, I'm burning my life for someone else. It would be hugely dishonest to me and probably whoever is depending on my working toward their goal. Is life worth living if it's for someone else?

**ELENA: So there is never a point in your life when you are looking for a predictable, safely defined path?**

MEG: I used to think so. I thought about the whole thing - building a house or renovating one, being a part of the community, going to Craftsman Bungalow Society meetings, discussing Stickly furniture, and I realized, you know, it's kind of boring. Other times, I would be hiking, getting higher and higher into the mountains, the rain would turn to sleet, and it's cold, the rocks are all shiny, and yet there is something so beautiful about them, there is something so alive, so in the moment, in the now. To me that is just great. I love that stuff, it thrills me. I have to be thrilled.

*"Women are trained not to play or have fun."*

## WOMEN AND FUN

**ELENA: How did you end up doing so many things that a woman usually doesn't do in this world? Was it because you could afford to do them, or because you had desire to do them?**

MEG: Both, obviously. If I didn't want to do something, or I didn't have the money, chances are I wouldn't do it.

**ELENA: Would you say it is harder for a woman to get to do fun things than for a man?**

MEG: For sure, society imposes that inequality. Women are trained not to play or have fun. Women are programmed to find "fun" in service, child-rearing and homemaking tasks. Like getting together to make doilies for the church rummage sale, while the men go off fishing, golfing, yacht racing, with their buddies; competing to show off who has the biggest disposable income and who is having the best time, or is the drunkest.

**ELENA: You don't think men are happy?**

MEG: I think it's all about showing off, I don't think there is any actual real joy in it.

**ELENA: How do women around you react to you being on your own (without a man), flying freely through life, not having children and the responsibilities that come with them?**

MEG: I don't know what they think. Never really thought about it, actually.

**ELENA: You have a theory that all women are lesbians. Can you tell me a bit about it.**

MEG: (laughs) Well, that's a bizarre question.

**ELENA: I think it is very interesting. I think, many women would like to hear what you have to say about that.**

MEG: I don't believe in "lesbian" or "heterosexual." I believe sexuality is just sexuality, but I think a woman will always get closer to another woman than she ever will to a man.

**ELENA: Like in nature, just because a male mates with a female it doesn't mean she would want to be with that male?**

MEG: No, of course not. From what I've seen, sex between women is genuine, it's exciting, it's mutual. Men tend to be intensely selfish. For them it is an actual physical need. Like having gas and needing to fart and it's the woman's obligation to provide that man a way to satisfy that need. Like what happens when you eat a lot of prunes and under-cooked cauliflower, you have a serious need to let it rip. I'm pretty sure that's what sexual need is like for men.

**ELENA: You don't think women need to have sex? A lot of them think they do.**

MEG: No, I don't think sex is a need. It is - if you want to reproduce and don't have a turkey baster.

**ELENA: What do you find to be attractive in a woman?**

MEG: Courage, strength, independence, and the willingness to take risks. What it really boils down to is a lack of fear. I find confidence, brilliance, passion and a love of life, very attractive.

**ELENA: Would you call yourself a "lesbian"? Who do you consider yourself to be?**

MEG: No, I don't call myself a "lesbian," I call myself a "person."

*"Nobody else I knew was in your situation. Nobody else would ever have done what you did."*

## **DECISION TO HELP ME FLEE**

**ELENA: What did you think of me when we corresponded on-line?**

MEG: I thought you were a silly girl.

**ELENA: In what way silly?**

MEG: Very young, I thought you were just fooling around. I didn't think you were very serious. Hey, it's social media.

**ELENA: Why did you want to know me better?**

MEG: You started to sound serious. You mentioned something about music, classical music, that showed me you had listened to something, really listened and were moved by it. You were curious and interested in things. You had an opinion and wanted to know mine. You weren't making jokes of things, belittling anyone or anything, you had some very interesting observations and views you expressed about the world you were living in. I saw a part of Russian life through your eyes, I had never known about. You were not trying to be cute, to show off.

**ELENA: What did you think of me after we met in Kiev?**

MEG: At first you were a deer-in-the-headlights. When I met you in Kiev, you were a scared little thing. I didn't know what to think of you at that point in time. I found it hard to believe you were the woman I corresponded with. By the time you were attacked, we were attacked, I realized that you were desperate to get out. That you were fighting for your survival, and that there was a lot to you that I wanted to know more about. We'd been all over Kiev, walked in the park, explored Pecherskaya Lavra, and some of the things that brought you joy thrilled me, proved to me you were truly sentient and worth knowing. You were also interested in the things I was. You saw beauty in almost everything. You were bringing beauty to Kiev that I hadn't noticed. Of course, I knew you were in serious trouble too.

**ELENA: How would you say I've changed over the past years?**

MEG: I think you've gotten stronger, more independent. I think you value life more than you ever did. I think you actually recognize life now. I don't think you recognized it then. You've become stronger and you've developed a more complete personality. You are not

self-absorbed about it, you are not narcissistic in that way. Mostly I think you've become stronger. And you've let that joy of life carry on and expend. I really love that.

**ELENA: Why do you think I have changed?**

MEG: Because you were allowed to.

**ELENA: Why did you chose me over people you knew in your past.**

MEG: It wasn't a choice.

**ELENA: You joined your life with mine. Why did you do it with me, not somebody else?**

MEG: You were in a lot of trouble, but I saw so much potential. The thing was - you were ready to go. You were ready to spread your wings, so I was going to help you fight. You needed me and I needed to ensure you survived. I was incapable of walking away.

**ELENA: And you don't think others needed you?**

MEG: Sure they did, but not like you did. The thing was, you had everything to loose and you were ready to give it all away. You were running for your life and I knew you were not going to make it without me. There was no question in my mind, I had to run with you.

When I turned around and went back to McDonald's - that was my decision. You said, on the phone, that you were in trouble, that you needed me and that you loved me, and I knew you really did. I went back there and when I heard you say "no" to your parents that was it - I knew then that you decided you were going to save your own life, and I wasn't going to let you fail. I was going to help you.

I knew that although you were determined, and standing up, ready to fight for your life and freedom, you weren't going to win. What I saw that just clinched it for me, was seeing that you truly loved yourself at that point, you loved life then. You were not going to let it go. You took a stand.

I knew it wouldn't be such a big thing for me to help you, be there for you, use my superhero-foreigner powers with the authorities, it would be a small thing for me. But without me, I knew, you were going to be lost, you were not going to make it. The bastards holding and beating you, were going to win.

I knew that I could change the Universe, I could make a difference, by being there for you, by standing up for you, by risking my own safe and somewhat meaningless existence. I could change my own Universe and everything all at once. It was totally clear

to me, that was the moment you either came out like a supernova or faded away. That was the crossroads.

Nobody else I knew was in your situation. Nobody else that I knew would ever have done what you did. So it wasn't just me, it was also you. You had just said to your parents: "No, I'm not going to give you my life. My life is my own. That's how I'm going to live it." It wasn't up for discussion, it was a declaration of war, of independence. I was blown away.

*"I am risking my life to have a life."*

## OUR ESCAPE FROM RUSSIA TO CANADA

**ELENA: Do you think you have special abilities or character attributes that made it possible for you to help me escape Russia and be with you?**

MEG: Nothing special, just a willingness to risk a way of life that's worthless without risking my own life. In other words I was willing to risk my life to have a life. I don't want a life of boredom, I don't want a life that's not mine. It has to be my life. I think that's really what it comes down to - being able to risk it. And I am willing to risk it. And we've come a long way, I had one hell of a ride! This has been great.

**ELENA: Did you doubt yourself at any moment prior to undertaking that trip?**

MEG: Never. It's not something I do. I never actually doubted myself.

**ELENA: What was the toughest part of our journey to Canada for you? Something that you thought you wouldn't be able to overcome?**

MEG: Coming up against other people, officials, crooks. When the assholes could actually kill us, or take the boat, or arrest you and drag you back to Russia. When it was all up to us... Hurricanes: bit of a blow. Sharks: no problem. Whales: "ha-ha, bring it on." Nothing like that bothered me. Storms, cold, the boat, the seas, the waves, pissed off whales - some of that sucked. But I never doubted us for a second, I knew we could make it. What I did doubt, and what did bother me, when I started feeling powerless, was when I was up against things like the Russian consulate in Odessa, and in Kiev, or your mother, or your crazy uncle, or the police in Kiev. Actually the police situation wasn't so bad - I just had to pay them off. It bothered me when we were dealing with assholes - with other people who actually had some way to physically stop us or hurt us. Like with the guy in Las-Palmas who was trying to get our boat. But I still think through it. Like it was with your mother, I knew that we just have to think through the situation, just had to get your passport back.

**ELENA: Did you doubt me during the trip to Canada? How useful or strong did you think I would be?**

MEG: I doubted you sometimes. But not really, you came around. I think you realized that I needed you. And that you needed you as well.

**ELENA: So you didn't doubt me?**

MEG: No, not after we passed Greece. Until we passed Greece I was a little concerned. But after that you screwed your courage to the sticking place and decided that you can be below deck, vomiting onto the floating floor boards, or you could take the helm and sail the damned boat.

**ELENA: It seemed to me when we were sailing to Canada you had no support from your family, was it so? Did you tell them what you were about to do?**

MEG: It was so, there was no support at all.

**ELENA: Did you speak to them about what you were going to do?**

MEG: Yes, I wrote to mother.

**ELENA: What was the answer?**

MEG: Nothing that I recall. I'm not sure there was any recognition of what we were doing, or about to do.

**ELENA: When you were writing to her did you say why you were doing this trip?**

MEG: Of course.

**ELENA: What was your mother's reply?**

MEG: I don't think she replied at all. I don't recall anything. I can check the satellite records. But I think if anything, it would have been "Well, have a nice time. Say hi to Lena or whatever her name is." Or "bla bla is such a nice place, we visited it once with so-and-so (celebrity) on the mega-yacht."

**ELENA: Before meeting me, what did you want your life to be like?**

MEG: I never really thought about it. I wanted to be an adventurer; I knew I wanted to make every second count.

**ELENA: Did you want to have a house?**

MEG: I could never conceive of myself as having a house, but I had a house and that was okay.

**ELENA: But I was under the impression you were building that perfect home of yours?**

MEG: I was at that point, that's what it became. Because every one talks about dream houses and slow motion memories of family and friends and home and belonging somewhere. All warm and fuzzy, yeah I fell for that. I guess I wasn't ready to pay the price for that - for family and safety to be a reality, there has to be losers. I wasn't willing to be a loser just so I could have the validation of my family. My family needed a loser and I was always it. I refused to be "it." So I bought an old house and I tried rebuild it into a brand-new old-house with brand-new old memories and a perfect past. If you have a past you can't live with, why not build yourself one you can live with? By "hammer and by hand" I was building the perfect Craftsman Bungalow past... or so I thought.

**ELENA: Did you think that house could be your future?**

MEG: No, I was thinking the house could be my past, a foundation. After what happened, especially after we got back and had to trash just about every meaningful "thing" I owned, or all that meaningful "stuff" into a 40 yard roll-off dumpster, and move back onto the boat, I realized the house wasn't a future. It was just another object, just stuff. Like you own a car, you own a house, a good set of golf clubs. It's all just stuff.

*"People fear dying because they are afraid that they haven't lived."*

**ELENA: It seems to me, you had no fear of pain or death when we were sailing to Canada. Would you say it is so?**

MEG: Absolutely.

**ELENA: Why?**

MEG: Because pain and death are entirely mine. I don't fear pain, I don't fear death. Death is the least I fear, actually. Because death means - that's it, it's over.

**ELENA: Why would you say people are afraid of death?**

MEG: I think they fear of dying because they are afraid that they haven't lived. And to die without having lived is terrifying. That I think is the greatest fear - the fear that you've wasted your life; that time's up. Time is ticking, it's going to run out, life is going to end. Life is all we've got now. Whatever you are experiencing matters only to you; it has to, nobody else cares. Your experience of this massively complex, but terminal, chemical reaction is yours alone! It really has to be all about you. You are the only one who can

have your life, you are not living for anybody else, if you do, that's the greatest fear: that you have not lived for yourself. Then of course, death is a terrifying thing.

**ELENA: Have you discovered something amazing during our trip to Canada? Something that profoundly affected you, changed your vision of life or the world?**

MEG: Yes, I think I did. Mostly what I learned is that one's happiness, one's feelings are entirely one's own and one's alone. You have to make it your own way. When we were out there, we would either live or we would die, something could kill us or we would survive it. We either made it through the night, or we didn't. It was entirely up to us. We fought to survive, we didn't let stuff kill us. We never worried that something might be too big for us, or bad, or impossible to live through. We just faced it, whatever challenge it was, and dealt with it; doing whatever it took without worrying we wouldn't get through it. It wasn't a thought process, it just happened.

What I learned about life is that it is really up to you. How you see your life and world is really your choice. And when you don't rage against it, feel sorry for yourself, don't scream and cry about something getting busted, and just get the tools and the spit and glue and try to fix it so you don't die, life is profoundly, amazingly beautiful. Questions, doubt, worrying... pointless. Whether you enjoy it, whether you cherish it with every breath, or whether you hate your life, resent it, feel cheated - it's entirely up to you.

Something else I learned was to feel things that I didn't even notice before. Tiny things suddenly had huge value to me, indescribable value. Like coffee - the taste of coffee. Before I would say "Coffee, start me up!" and Hoover it down. Now I actually taste it, and you know, every single brew is different. Even every single cup. I never knew the difference before. I just never cared to notice. I learned that some of the most overwhelming, indescribable, life experiences are the first sip of coffee in the morning; or the feeling of sheets, getting into bed at night; or the call of a crow, or dog barking, or rain just starting to fall. I never noticed that sort of thing before.

**ELENA: Why do you think it never happened to you prior to our journey to Canada?**

MEG: Because there was so much chatter, so much useless crap in my mind. That was all about paying the taxes, making sure the bills were covered, and endless forms were filled, that the car had the oil changed on time, that I'd had so-and-so over for dinner, that the neighbors weren't pissed off about the dandelions, that my shoes matched my outfit. There is so much of that chatter, useless crap going on, that you miss life, you miss the truly profound - and every moment is profound. All that chatter prevents you from

realizing, "wow, that just made me feel something, I liked the way that felt." It's also the dependence. We are programmed to be completely dependent. If we weren't we wouldn't be mindless consumers and providers of labor, and we'd be useless to society. For society to function it is imperative that we are dependent on everything but ourselves, to keep that flow of money going that feeds the elite. But out "there," on the high seas, there is no such thing as dependence. When things go wrong, who you gonna call?

**ELENA: How did the idea to sail with me to Canada enter your mind? You must have known that you would loose your home, your status, maybe your life!**

MEG: I had no other choice. I knew what had to be done - I needed to get you out of there. I couldn't leave you behind, you would be lost. I'm pretty sure that leaving you behind would have actually killed me.

**ELENA: So it was all about me?**

MEG: No, it was also about me. I wasn't going to give in. Everything was standing in our way. Everyone was saying we couldn't do this, that they would crush us. I just knew that I would stop at nothing to prove it wrong. When somebody puts something in my way, I am going to either go over it, around it, or right through it.

**ELENA: Weren't you scared, preparing and undertaking the trip, doing it completely on your own?**

MEG: Sure, I had no one to help me, but I didn't think about it that way.

**ELENA: You didn't feel lonely? You didn't need people's support, your family's support perhaps?**

MEG: No, I didn't have it, didn't feel it. Sure there were times I felt alone, sorry for myself. But it was only when it was Christmas and we were somewhere offshore, floating around - then I indulged in some self pity. But mostly, it was you and me and that's it.

*"I move on, I don't pull things out of the past, I can't."*

## **MEG'S PAST AND CURRENT LIFE**

**ELENA: Are you glad I am in your life, despite the troubles I got you in, which you would never have without me?**

MEG: What a question! Yes, obviously I am. I don't know what my life would be like without you, and frankly, I don't think about alternative scenarios, I'm busy experiencing the current reality.

**ELENA: Saving me, you lost your social standing, wealth, safety and we got into the nightmare with Immigration.**

MEG: I am where I am, and that's it.

**ELENA: You still would rather live the life you have now?**

MEG: Yes.

**ELENA: When you recall your past life, life you lived before going to Kiev, what do you think of it?**

MEG: Boring, tense, always on edge - I wouldn't exactly call it a life or living.

**ELENA: Would you want your old life back? Or anything from it?**

MEG: Nothing. I move on, I don't pull things out of the past, I can't. Nor do I want to.

**ELENA: Is there anything from your past life that you want?**

MEG: Money was nice, it was safety. And that is about it.

**ELENA: What is it, if anything, that you have in your current life that you didn't in the old one?**

MEG: I am way more aware of life and experience. I guess, I've picked up a bit of wisdom and experience, and I'm having one heck of a great adventure!

**ELENA: How would you describe the people you dealt with in your old world in Canada, I guess you would call them "rich" people? What were they like?**

MEG: They tend to worry about ridiculous trivialities; like how they look. There's an irrational fear of being embarrassed. Generally, they are the most self obsessed, self important, narrow-minded people this side of Key West. You've met my family...

**ELENA: I don't mean only your family. I mean anybody from that layer of society of wealthy people who don't have to worry about sheer survival.**

MEG: I didn't know them all, but as a rule, they are elitist, arrogant, mean, clueless, narrow minded, ignorant and bigoted.

**ELENA: You didn't see anything positive in that world?**

MEG: Money: saw lots of money - that's a positive thing when you consider the safety it buys. There's a reason it's called 'security.'

**ELENA: You never found yourself being comfortable in that society?**

MEG: 'Comfortable' is a word with many meanings in that context. I was certainly physically comfortable, I was safe, I could pretty much have anything I wanted, but I was emotionally uncomfortable. I was never good enough. Remember, the whole modus operandi of that echelon is to find fault with others to build yourself up. I really didn't care much about that. I just wanted to do my own thing. That meant I was anti-social, or emotionally challenged, or whatever flavor of psycho-babble, the chattering classes came up with to give themselves some validity. It also meant that because I was broken, and needed fixing, I was a pet project, a hobby for bored rich housewives (especially doctor's wives) to fuss over. I think it made them feel better to find anyone, even their own kids -- especially, their own kids -- lesser than them because they had problems. If, on the other hand, you came across someone you couldn't fix by reciting pop-psychology, or they wouldn't put up with it because they weren't shallow and insecure, you simply denigrated them behind their backs for being lesser than you.

**ELENA: Does a wealthy person, a person of high standing in Canada, have to follow certain rules in order to maintain that standing? Did you follow them?**

MEG: An interesting question: there are definite rules of conduct, and displays of disposable wealth, that must be adhered to religiously to ensure acceptance in that layer of society, but here's the kicker: the image, the optics, the show, is more important than the money. Money is no guarantee of elite membership on it's own.

**ELENA: What is the right image, behavior, show?**

MEG: You need to remain aloof. Unaware of anything disturbing, unsettling, possibly guilt provoking. You need to act like everyone is there to serve you, and as long as you play by the rules, every problem, even death itself, can be solved. Like the world is choking in pollution, kids are malnourished in the tropics, and you could maybe have a

niggling bit of guilt about driving your monster, Lexus SUV to yoga class, but you don't need to because you put your tin cans in the recycling box, so you are saving the world. You might show some kind of social awareness, some justification of your elite sized footprint, by buying 'organic' at Whole Foods and decorating the guest bedroom with handicrafts from a Tibetan orphanage. It's all about making a show of being so totally erudite, aware, cultured, caring and proactive, while actually doing absolutely nothing but puffing up your own ego and convincing yourself of your stupendous self worth.

I don't think I was terribly aware of being in that social class. It was society, you sort of exist in it, and you are unaware of anything else. Like fish might notice other fish, but not the water. The only people who exist to you, are the people who are on your own financial plane, and everybody else is kind of background, like furniture.

**ELENA: You are saying that you didn't notice anything beyond that "comfort zone"?**

MEG: You knew it was out there, but it never came into play. Like the starving kids in Africa, Mom would use to guilt us into finishing our fiddle-head greens and stop surreptitiously feeding our roast beef to the poodle... you knew there was something out there beyond your social class but it was never really given much thought or consideration.

*"People have relationships because they think they have to.  
It's like 'I gotta have shoes' or 'I have to wear pants in  
public.'"*

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE**

**ELENA: What people are you drawn to?**

MEG: People with energy, people who are alive, who are joyful, adventurous. And who are willing to take a risk. People who would do anything it takes to get what they want. I like that.

**ELENA: I think you pretty much described yourself.**

We both laugh.

**ELENA: What makes a good relationship between two people, in your opinion?**

MEG: I think it's being able to be yourself with the other person and that's it. Having no fear.

**ELENA: No fear of what?**

MEG: No fear of rejection, betrayal, judgment, ridicule, not measuring up, not meeting expectations: just - no fear. You trust this person implicitly. I trusted you with my life and you trusted me with yours. It's just a relationship without fear or doubts.

**ELENA: Do you think people usually have this kind of relationship? Why do you think they have fear?**

MEG: Just because they do, it's human nature. People have relationships because they think they have to. It's like "I gotta have shoes" or "I have to wear pants in public," it's a social norm and there's a huge industry built on it. Sometimes people are having relationships not because they want to, but because they think they have to, or because they are afraid of being alone.

**ELENA: But that's a pretty huge commitment, don't you think?**

MEG: I think so, but it depends on who you ask. A lot of people change relationships every 2 weeks.

**ELENA: So you are saying that people are together because they think they have to?**

MEG: Absolutely. I think a lot of them are. It's also seriously, heavy-duty, programmed into us, hard coded by nature and reinforced by the media and social programming to

ensure a market for the relationship products, like houses, cars, furniture, and to secure a source of future consumers.

**ELENA: What is your relationship with your family like now?**

MEG: What relationship? What family? I don't know my family. I'm pretty sure they don't want to know me.

**ELENA: How do you feel about that?**

MEG: So what? Shit happens, "Bummer, dude."

**ELENA: Does it bother you that you have no relationship with your family?**

MEG: I guess I feel a little put out. It would be nice to have a family relationship, it would be nice to have somewhere to go to, somewhere to fly to, to send presents to, to be able to say, these are my people, they love me, no matter what.

**ELENA: But that's not the condition, so "too bad"?**

MEG: Yeah, too bad. Get on with it, move on.

*"In Russia, I've never seen any support for anybody: male, female, human, non-human, plant, animal... nothing."*

## **MEG'S REFLECTIONS ON A WOMAN'S PLACE IN RUSSIA**

**ELENA: What is your opinion of Russian women?**

MEG: They tend to be subservient, scared and subdued. It comes across to me, like they play what ever game is needed to exist within the confines of their society, like any society. I see Russian women the way American women were portrayed by the popular media in the 50-tees: housewives and mothers, appendages, assets, chattel of a man. Think Bewitched without the magic and none of the money.

**ELENA: You've been in Russia, so you know what a woman's life there is like. Do you think this life is a happy one?**

MEG: No. I think some can find happiness, some find ways of doing it, but no. I don't think I actually met any woman who was truly happy. I met Russian men who were happy, but not Russian women.

**ELENA: Do you think the life of a Canadian or American woman is in any way different from that of a Russian?**

MEG: Absolutely. Albeit reluctantly, Canadian/American society had to accept universal freedoms, and get over male superiority and segregation. Women have far more power and safety here than in Russia. There is more of a legally mandated equality here, and even a social stigmatization of violence against women, or possessive, degrading behavior. Then again, I think American women have far more support from their own communities, families, society, and colleagues than Canadian women. But Russian women really tend to be subjugated, subdued and denigrated and it's kind of a societal norm there. I think it's getting worse, not better, especially as there appears to be an overt attack and erosion of women's rights taking place in Russia along with the rise of religious extremism and intolerance.

**ELENA: What would be your answer to anybody who tells you you have to be with a man, have children, be more "feminine"?**

MEG: I can't answer that without saying a lot of bad words.

**ELENA: If you could speak to a woman in Russia who desperately wants to live life on her own terms, but to whom everything and everybody around her tells her she is wrong and should get married and have children, what would you tell her?**

MEG: I would tell her to empty her bank account, put everything she can get into a knapsack, no matter what it is, and get the first plane to New York, to San Francisco, or to Los Angeles or where ever she wants to be. To get off the plane and to hook up with a group of like minded people, of open minded people, friends, find an atheists group, a feminist group, a LGBT group, an outdoors group, if that's what she's into. Go to the University and just say "Help! I want to stay here, I want to live this life, I want to be free."

**ELENA: So you think that free thinking Russian woman can find happiness only outside of Russia?**

MEG: You know better than anyone, there is zero support for women in Russia. It's getting better in Ukraine, better even in the former east-block, better in the UK, but the best support is British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, California. The northern, big, US cities aren't bad either: New York, Boston, Chicago. In Russia, I've never seen any support for anybody: male, female, human, non-human, plant, animal... nothing. And that's the difference with Russia and America and even Canada to some extent - is that within these societies, over here, groups of people form. Total strangers come together and immediately form bonds without fear. In Russia, though, the fear is that your husband is going to find out, you are going to have the crap beat out of you, you are going to be raped and knocked up, locked up, murdered, you are going to have your rights taken away from you. That fear isn't here, in America and Canada. It is even illegal here to instill that kind of fear into somebody, to oppress, harass, threaten someone.

The only way it can work inside Russia is if women get together and form some kind of support group, some kind of collective. But that's not going to be allowed. They will be pushed to the side, they will be denigrated, rejected, dismissed, belittled - and very possibly jailed or killed. Male dominance and ownership of females is very much a sacred Russian custom, and getting more entrenched every day. I think Russian men have a pathological fear of women having power or control.

**ELENA: Can groups on social media be any help, you think?**

MEG: They are monitored. And social media is never a help. Social media is simply yakking, squawking, marketing - there's nothing real there, no commitment. Texted, or twittered words of support are fine, but they are essentially useless, they don't cost anything real. You need physical support in a situation like that. You actually need to get together, you need to see each other face-to-face. You need to cry on someone's shoulder and know they aren't laughing behind your back, passing your desperate pleas to your

husband, or the police, and you can't do that over the Internet. You need more than anonymous text.

**ELENA: You can fix almost anything. Were you always into mechanics, engines and Jerry-rigging stuff. Do you think there is such thing as man's and woman's jobs?**

MEG: No, there is no such thing as men's and women's jobs. I think we all do what needs to be done. If you tell yourself you can't do it, or I am not allowed to do that - then sure enough, you won't. The only reason women think that they can't do things, is because they are told they can't do things.

**ELENA: What would you say to a woman who, like you, likes to putter around with electronics or engines. Should she feel awkward?**

MEG: No reason to feel awkward. It's about doing what you want, what you need to for yourself; besides, "awkward" is a feeling caused by concern about what others think. Caring about what others think is seriously self destructive and wasteful. If something works for you, and especially if it is making a difference, do it with abandon and passion.

*"Women are told they are victims, are weaker, are vulnerable, but they really aren't."*

## **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

**ELENA: If you were a women living in Russia how would you live your life?**

MEG: I would try to live it the way I live it now.

**ELENA: Do you think there is a hope for gays and lesbians in Russia to one day live in a society that doesn't abuse and humiliate a person just because she loves a person of her sex?**

MEG: Of course I do. I think they have to stand up for themselves. The point is, though, the Russian government, and it's media, is using the LGBT community as an enemy-within for social manipulation. The LGBT community has to unite and deny the government and media that power.

**ELENA: How do you think that's possible?**

MEG: By enough people being out, enough of society being out, being visible! If everyone came out and was counted, there would be no enemy, it would just be people. Vilifying a large percentage of your population inevitably leads to genocide.

**ELENA: What is the main obstacle to a society that would accept LGBT people in Russia, you think?**

MEG: Fear.

**ELENA: In your life did you have to act for some one, changing your true self?**

MEG: Of course. It happens to everybody. You eventually realize what you are doing and outgrow it, and get out of the situation in which you are doing it.

**ELENA: How did you resolve this situation?**

MEG: Walked away. I just went on with my life. You don't give these people the time of day... eventually.

**ELENA: Do you think it is possible, even if the people who try to turn you into somebody you are not, are your parents, your colleagues, your friends?**

MEG: I think it is not only possible, I think it's imperative! Parents, friends, colleagues, bosses, whatever... they are all just people. If they are destroying your life, making it any less valuable, hurting you, making you uncomfortable, trashing your experience of living,

you need to get away from them. In the meantime, if you need to get paid, or get fed, or need a place to live, or protect your children, and that forces you into a situation that these people can tear away at you and wear you down, you have find ways to deal with it. Try to think through it, don't let it affect you, until you can change your situation and get away from it, much like you did. Insulate yourself, and know it is going to change when you break free. But if it's somebody who you don't have to deal with for physical survival - just don't deal with them. Walk away.

**ELENA: Do you think the modern world can one day become a safe and enjoyable world for a woman to live in? Or do you think women will be always in danger and treated as a second class people? With their main functions being servicing men and raising children?**

MEG: "Them" and "us" terminology is a pisser. We are all just people. I think there are places in the world now, that are safe and enjoyable for everyone - even women. I also believe it is up to everyone, especially women, to take back their lives, and the world will have no choice but to become a better place.

**ELENA: The reality is, women are in danger pretty much at any time.**

MEG: I agree. Society trains men to be dominant and women to be subservient and afraid. If society didn't do this, there would be no danger. It's a victim mentality. Women are told they are victims, are weaker, are vulnerable, but they really aren't. With access to guns, police protection, and cast iron frying pans, sexually dimorphic size difference is no longer a factor. Women, in fact, no one, has to be a victim.

**ELENA: Do you believe that other women could do what we did - sail to the other side of the world on their own?**

MEG: There is nothing about being a woman or gender that stops anyone from doing anything, apart from the various roles involved with procreation.

**ELENA: Do you think there are limits to women's capabilities? The well known concept is - women are less capable because of their weaker than men's body. What would you say about such argument?**

MEG: In a physical sense it's true, but I would say there is absolutely nothing that women can't do that men can. I guess a woman can't get someone knocked up. If we are talking about strength - sure, men have stronger bodies, but there are also women who can be strong too if they lift weights. Yes, physically, men are bigger, they are stronger, and their

hormones make them aggressive, make them think differently, but the only thing that you need a man for is stud. That's it.

**ELENA: If you had known what I was going through in Russia before meeting you in Kiev, what would you advise me then?**

MEG: I think you did exactly what you needed to do by deflecting the situation, biding your time, kissing ass, until you could get to Kiev, gather your troops, that would be me, and declare your independence from a position of power. What's most important is that you didn't let them win, you did what you needed to, to take back your life.

*"If I can cut through the programming and convince someone her life is hers alone, and she can take it back - that is thrilling, a moment of paradise for me!"*

## WHAT MAKES MEG HAPPY

**ELENA: What would be the absolute paradise for you - something that you love doing or experiencing? The condition that you find yourself the happiest in?**

MEG: Igniting people's passion. I love it when someone clues in to what I am saying; when I say something that turns the lights on inside them; shows them something they hadn't noticed. If I can cut through the programming and convince someone her life is hers alone, and she can take it back - that is thrilling, a moment of paradise for me! When someone sees the obvious, takes back her life, that is the greatest thing.

I used to teach humongous, first-year, computer programming classes in University. Most of the students had to be there, as a requirement, and couldn't care less about JAVA programming. I loved making some pedantic little programming exercise funny, enjoyable and exciting. I loved cracking jokes and having the lecture theater in stitches. I have also done some acting. When you are on stage and really connect with the audience - there is nothing greater.

*"Love yourself. Never let anyone tell you how to feel, or what is right and what isn't. Only you know that."*

## FINAL WORD TO WOMEN

**ELENA: Imagine you have a few minutes left before you have to part with your female audience in a hall somewhere, what would you tell them?**

MEG: Do whatever is right for YOU! If something in your life isn't right for you - it is wrong, it will hurt you. Love yourself. Never let anyone tell you how to feel or what is right and what isn't. Only you know that. ONLY YOU. You must be the most important person in your life. Only you can live your life. It is the only precious thing you have - that finite chemical reaction that gives you a sentient connection with your universe. Others will try to take it from you, make you live for them, enslave you for their goals, their dreams, their aggrandizement, their company, their bank account, their honor. Your life doesn't have any value to them. They will convince you it is wrong to live for yourself, that you must ignore your own needs, deny yourself any joy, that to do otherwise is wrong! They will threaten you, belittle you, even promise you a better life when you are dead. Insanity!

Whatever you do, do it entirely for you. Do whatever it takes to get your life back, and if there's no other way to get out of a bad situation, then just like at the end of Gorod Zero I'd say "run!"

Learn more about our escape from Russia at

**[www.cadenza.ca](http://www.cadenza.ca)**